

27<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Hindmarsh Shire Council  
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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.

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.

Some notable statistics:

- Population 5701 (2021 census) – est. 5464 (2024)
- Registered dogs = 894 (possibly up to c.2000 based on average no. of households)
- Registered cats = 301 (possibly up to c.2000 based on average no. of households)
- DAMP states 3 Authorised Officers for animal management
- Impounded cats 2024/25 = 123 – 120 euthanised. NB: Why are there no rescue options listed or recorded for cats?
- Council run pound facility in Nhill – no contact details or address listed anywhere – impounded animals do not seem to be advertised anywhere either.

### **Key Commendations and Great Initiatives:**

Animal Care Australia commends Council on:

- ✓ New off-lead dog park established in Nhill in 2024. **NB:** Cannot find any other specifically listed off-lead areas. Does Council have more than Nhill?
- ✓ Impounded dogs 2024/25 = 7 – 0 euthanised – unclaimed rehomed via rescue.

- ✓ Initiatives to conduct info sessions with community groups and educational facilities. **NB:** These could expand to attendances at community events, fairs, etc.
- ✓ It is great that Council is looking into communication with foster care networks and rescue groups and to enter into 84Y agreements with more groups, especially for cats (120 out of 123 impounded cats being euthanised is not a statistic to be proud of).
- ✓ Promoting desexing.
- ✓ Commendable to see Council running a local impound facility.

### **Feedback on sections of the DAMP:**

#### **Training of Authorised Officers:**

Animal Care Australia notes there are no specific training goals/qualifications listed for Councils authorised officers. This makes it impossible to measure the effectiveness of training or the number of officers unmeasurable due to vagueness of training plan listed in the DAMP.

Council MUST realise that in these times, measurable data etc needs to be transparent as it is no longer just reliant upon Council determining their own efficiency. Council's behaviour, accountability, and effectiveness at meeting requirements is open to public scrutiny.

#### **Reduce euthanasia and overpopulation:**

While Animal Care Australia commend Council on looking into communication with foster care networks and rescue groups, it is important there is a considered effort on rehoming for cats as 120 out of 123 impounded cats being euthanised is not a statistic Council should be proud of. This raises serious questions as to Council's ability to correctly assess the behaviour of cats being impounded, as it appears far too many cats are being incorrectly determined as feral.

Cats cannot simply be designated as "pets" or "ferals" – they also comprise "unowned/colony" cats. To designate only two options ostensibly dooms all trapped un-microchipped cats to euthanasia.

Animal Care Australia strongly recommends Council re-evaluate how it determines whether a cat is feral especially considering the identified classifications of cats and their management within the Victorian Cat Management Strategy 2025. <sup>1</sup>

Animal Care Australia commend promoting desexing and we believe Council could look into options for providing vouchers for low cost desexing (consult with vet clinics, etc). Doing so may mean Council could also qualify an Authorised Officer to perform microchipping and then provide free or low-cost chipping at local events.

Animal Care Australia notes Councils local impound facility has no information about its location or contact details available on Council website. Also, there is no active promotion of impounded animals on website or Council's social media page.

Animal Care Australia is concerned that Council's Pound release fees (as per schedule of fees and charges in council budget document) are quite high, and when added to microchipping/registration costs, and any infringement costs, may be a deterrent to residents reclaiming lost pets. Council should look into reducing release fees, and/or offering payment plans for financially compromised pet owners – as offered by many other councils.

State government can be approached for grants to assist in offering desexing vouchers for financially compromised owners.

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<sup>1</sup> [Victorian Cat Management Strategy](#)

### **Encourage registration:**

While registration fees are relatively low in comparison with some council areas, it is our contention that a slight decrease would see an increase in uptake and renewal statistics. The current cost-of-living crisis is hitting the community hard and each step (no matter how small) councils take – and promote they are taking – assists your residents and your reputation.

Equally, animal number caps should only be enforced when compliance is required after an amenity issue arises – mandatory caps for all residents and charging excess animal permits only serves as a deterrent to those who may have more than the listed numbers, and are avoiding registering due to not wanting to be hit with extra fees for excess animals. Accordingly, **Animal Care Australia DOES NOT SUPPORT mandatory excess animal permits.**

### **In closing:**

It is necessary to call your attention to Council's Keeping of Animals restrictions noted on Council's website.<sup>2</sup>

*An Excess Animal Permit is required if you intend to keep more than the allowed number or type of animals on a residential or township-zoned property. The limits include:*

*More than 2 dogs or 2 cats (over 3 months old)*

*More than 50 small or 10 large domestic birds*

*More than 12 poultry or 1 rooster*

***More than 6 rodents or 6 reptiles***

***More than 5 different types of animals***

*Any horse, cattle, sheep, goat, pig, or other unspecified animal types*

*Payment of a **\$235.00 lodgement fee** (invoiced upon registration)*

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 without the need for permits.

The lodgement fee is extremely expensive – even if it is for a 3-year license period.

The number restrictions on 'rodents,' reptiles, and small birds is **NOT SUPPORTED by Animal Care Australia** as this contradicts the animal welfare needs of the individual species – in particular, rodents where there are multiple species of rodents kept as pets.

The limiting of a total of only 6 'rodents' raises concerns. Rats, mice, ferrets, and guinea pigs ARE ALL rodents. Only 6 of these does not meet the animal welfare needs of the animals.

Animal Care Australia also notes there is no age of progeny of animals listed on the website. The species restricted as mentioned above all have solid numbers of progeny at any given birth or hatching, which raises the question as to how anyone could meet these requirements WITHOUT the requirement of an Excess Animal Permit – again – revenue raising and not animal welfare orientated.

### **Small Mammals:**

Rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, rats, and mice are considered as house pets and have been for some time now.

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.

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<sup>2</sup> [Keeping of Excess Animals – Council website](#)

Owners of these smaller pet's work to improve the quality of the animal in health, 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 Animal Welfare Acts.

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

### **Guinea Pigs**

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. <sup>3</sup>.

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.

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 two 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 just five!

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### **Reptiles:**

A permit to keep reptiles is already issued by The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and it dictates how reptiles should be kept.

Reptiles are extremely popular, particularly in circumstances of higher residential density areas, they make no noise, and despite common misconception produce little to no odour. Reptiles come in a range of sizes and husbandry needs. There are a broad range of alternative and legitimate management and housing systems and numerous other factors that should be considered when keeping reptiles/amphibians.

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<sup>3</sup> [Short Communication: Rats Demand for Group Size - Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 7 \(4\) 267-272 – 2004\)](#)

For reptiles, where hundreds of different species are being regulated under State Regulation via the Wildlife Act 1975<sup>4</sup> and associated Regulations, which governs the keeping of reptiles by setting licensing requirements and regulating which species can be kept.

The vast majority of reptiles are housed in small enclosures, with many enclosures capable of existing in a child's bedroom or other small space (substantially less than the stated 3999m<sup>2</sup>). Number restrictions are simply not applicable and are inappropriate for ensuring sound animal welfare standards. The table should simply stipulate the reptiles must be kept in accordance with the Victorian Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals — Private Keeping of Reptiles.<sup>5</sup>

### **Birds:**

The proposed numbers relating to the keeping of small and large birds is ill-founded. Clearly no one has been consulted on bird numbers and most importantly bird welfare and one needs to 'mind read' to ascertain the difference of a large bird and a small bird?

What is a 'large' bird? A rosella, a macaw, or a galah? When does a bird go from being 'small' to 'large'? Some will argue a pet rosella or conure is small while others will deem them large. Why exactly does Council need to approve this?

Restrictions based on numbers of birds are archaic and reflective of animal rights ideologies. Birds come in a range of sizes and temperaments, many are flock species, there is a broad range of alternative and legitimate management and housing systems and numerous other factors. For birds, where hundreds of different species are being regulated, numbers are simple for legislators but inappropriate for ensuring sound animal welfare standards.

Animal Care Australia strongly recommends Council excludes the restriction of birds when the resident is keeping their birds in compliance with the Agriculture Victoria's Code of Practice—Housing of Caged Birds.<sup>6</sup>

If numbers are to be restricted, then doing so according to this code has legitimacy and should be based on the housing needs of the particular species in question, for example keeping of requirements for canaries is vastly different to those of budgies. It must be breed and husbandry need specific. Thirty finches have far different needs than thirty budgies.

Councils' restrictions are not supported as your residents would be hobbyists and current nuisance laws with regard to noise, odour, vermin, etc. are sufficient to ensure neighbour amenity is maintained should any problems occur.

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

**The restriction requiring a permit if you keep more than 5 of any animal is TOTALLY OPPOSED.**

Mandated 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. Any excuse that these restrictions have previously existed simply highlights the level of laziness in ensuring the most up to date animal welfare needs and community expectations are being met.

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](#)

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<sup>4</sup> [Wildlife Act 1975](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals — Private Keeping of Reptiles](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Code of Practice—Housing of Caged Birds](#)

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 that reads "M Donnelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Donnelly

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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