

CITY OF WHYALLA ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

2023 – 2028



WHYALLA

First Nations Acknowledgement

*We acknowledge the Barngarla People
as the custodians of this ancient land
and recognise that they have been
living on these lands
for many thousands of generations.*

*We value their traditions
and recognise that these traditions
are as important to the
living Barngarla People today
as they were in the past
and that they make considerable
contribution to the culture of our city.*



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Approved by Dog and Cat Management Board:
(Plan must be approved by the Board before it can come into effect)
Date Plan comes into effect:
Review Date:
(4 years from date Plan comes into effect)

13/10/2022

20/03/2023

20/03/2027



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Animal Management Plan focuses on community expectations and Whyalla City Council's commitment to provide a dog and cat management service that is consistent and fair and includes continuing education of the legislative provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act (the Act) which came into effect on 1 July 2018.

The Plan reflects on some of the objectives and strategies outlined in council's previous Animal Management Plan and Council's Public Health Plan and draws on the City's Strategic Plan framework and the themes:

Our People – Provide a range of services and facilities which promote a safe and engaged community which is healthy, culturally, and socially rich.

Our Places – Protect our natural environment and enhance our built environment to ensure the environmental, social, physical and economic needs of the City are met.

There are three main Objectives that are highlighted in the Plan:

- **Responsible Owners**

Residents are informed and aware of their responsibilities and comply with their legal obligations as pet owners.

- **Educated Community**

The community is kept engaged with regular media releases, face to face information sessions and reminders of dog and cat laws.

- **Proactive Council**

Engaged and skilled officers educate, investigate, and enforce the law if required on all dog and cat issues reported by residents or visitors.

The strategies outlined in each of the above Objectives in Part 7 of this Plan also support Council's Public Health Plan and the themes:

Theme 1: Community and Culture; A City that is accessible and culturally inclusive and where residents feel safe, healthy, and connected

Theme 2: Connection and Support; People in our community feel connected and can access support, services, activities, facilities, and information when needed.

Theme 3: Active, Healthy Living; People are using the parks, open spaces, and services to live active and healthy lifestyles

Theme 4: Healthy People and Healthy Places; The community is protected from public health risks; our natural and built assets are being maintained and sustainability is integral in our programs and decision-making processes

The Animal Management Plan supports the Public Health Plan by keeping the community residents safer and healthier because of animal management, particularly around open space management of parks and gardens, stray and unidentified animal management, and the promotion of responsible animal management through subsidised registration, microchipping and desexing programs.

Pets can have many benefits for their owner's health and wellbeing. Dogs and Cats are often considered to be integral members of the family and provide companionship and affection as well as encouraging more physical activity and can help with building social networks in the community.

2. BACKGROUND

The Animal Management Plan will, over the next five years, provide guidance and direction for Council to manage dogs and cats in the community.

To gain a better understanding of community expectations, Council conducted a survey to gauge the community's views of dogs and cats in the city and gathered a list of priorities that have assisted in the development of the Plan.

The survey was an online survey with hard copies available at key outlets across the city (vets, pet shops, Council Library, RSPCA). The survey received over 250 responses.

Council staff held information days at the local shopping centre and one-on-one conversations with residents while they were out with their dogs at the Dog Park, Foreshore and around the city.

3. THE LAW/GUIDELINES

The objectives of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 are to:

- **Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership**
- **Reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats**
- **Promote the effective management of dogs and cats**

The Dog and Cat Management Act, Section 26A requires all South Australian Councils to prepare a plan relating to the management of dogs and cats within its area every five years.

The plan must include provisions for parks where dogs may be exercised off-leash and for parks where dogs must be under effective control by means of physical restraint and may include provisions for parks where dogs are prohibited.

The Dog and Cat Management Board must approve the plan before it takes effect.

The responsibilities delegated to Councils under the Dog and Cat Management Act that are of relevance to this plan are to:

Dog registration:

- Maintain a register of dogs and make available for inspection by members of the public
- Appoint a suitable person to be registrar
- Appoint at least one full-time authorised person or make other satisfactory arrangements for the exercise of the functions and powers of authorised persons

- Make satisfactory arrangements for the detention of dogs seized under this Act and may make such arrangements for cats seized under this Act

Dog and Cat responsibilities:

- Ensure that all dog and cat registrations are kept on a statewide database known as Dogs and Cats Online (DACO)
- Ensure that all newly registered dogs are issued with a lifetime registration number on a disc reducing the environmental impact of issuing annual plastic discs
- Ensure the mandatory microchipping and desexing of dogs and cats, with exemptions for working dogs
- Encourage all breeders of dogs and cats to adhere to the “South Australian Standards and Guidelines for Breeding and Trading Companion Animals”
 - Breeders must also register with the Dog and Cat Management Board if they are intending to sell a dog or cat they have bred
 - A dog or cat must not be sold unless it has been microchipped in accordance with the Act
- Ensure that breeders and sellers include their contact details and breeder registration number in any advertisement placed for the sale of a dog or cat

Councils may also make by-laws for the control and management of dogs or cats. Council currently has a Dog By-law and a Cat By-law.

4. REVENUE

In 2021/2022 there were 4742 dogs and 1694 cats registered with Council in the Whyalla City Council area.

Dog and Cat registration fees

Council sets registration fees annually and these fees are included in Council’s fees and charges register.

In the case of a standard dog (a dog that is both microchipped and desexed), Council must provide for a percentage rebate of the non-standard fee. Council's current rebate is 50%.

Money received by a council under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 must be expended in the administration or enforcement of the provisions of this Act relating to dogs and cats.

Council receives approximately \$150,000 per year from dog registrations and these funds are used to provide animal management services across the City.

Councils must pay into the Dog and Cat Management Board's Fund the percentage fixed by regulation of the dog registration fees received. The Board uses these funds from across Councils to administer the Dogs and Cats Online statewide registration database, amongst other strategic activities such as, promotion of responsible dog and cat ownership statewide, legislative reviews, and assisting with council's obligations in the administration of the Dog and Cat Management Act.

Whyalla's percentage of fees paid to the Board is 12%, this does not include monies received for cat registration fees.



5. COUNCIL'S MANAGEMENT OF DOGS

Council's Regulatory Services Team is part of the Governance Unit in the Corporate Services Department. Council has 1 full time equivalent Animal Management Officer in addition to the Registrar of Dogs.

Animal Management Officers are responsible for investigating dog attacks and other offences under the Dog and Cat Management Act. The Animal Management Officer also responds to nuisance dog and cat complaints and provides education, advice and assistance on all dog and cat issues in the community.

Number of dogs registered in Whyalla over the last 5 years:

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
4742	4382	4392	4558	4695

Dog Attacks and Complaints

Dog attacks on other animals

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
18	7	7	25	11

Dog harassment of animals

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
5	4	5	4	5

Dog attacks on humans

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
9	5	10	8	4

Dog harassment of humans

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
19	5	6	25	6

Nuisance complaints

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
69	61	38	89	60

Wandering complaints

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
310*	9	14	69	10

(*2021/2022 data now includes dogs that were wandering at large and subsequently impounded)

Dogs seized and detained

Total number of dogs impounded

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
295	297	347	411	370

Total number of dogs returned to owner

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
140	212	239	275	238

Total number of unclaimed dogs surrendered by council for re-homing

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
145	83	102	116	110

Council commenced a Professional Services Agreement with the RSPCA to provide Animal Management Services in September 2018, including managing the Council's Dog and Cat Centre, taking responsibility for after-hours animal seizures, and taking responsibility for re-homing unclaimed and surrendered animals.

Over the last 3 years, combined with Council's focus on educating dog and cat owners, this has resulted in less dogs being impounded. Although there were less dogs impounded in the 2021/2022 financial year, there were also considerably less dogs that were returned to their owner. Council will continue to focus on registration and identification (microchipping) of dogs to increase the numbers of dogs going home.

Through the Animal Management Services Agreement with the RSPCA, any suitable dogs that are left unclaimed are surrendered by council to the RSPCA for the purpose of rehoming.

6. COUNCIL'S MANAGEMENT OF CATS

The Agreement with RSPCA to provide Animal Management Services also includes services to manage cats.

Council invested in a more focused approach to Cat Management with the commencement of its reviewed Cat By-law in 2014. A new Cat By-law, containing substantially the same provisions, commenced in January 2022. The by-law includes cat registration (registration fees are payable to council), limits on cat numbers per household, a cat curfew and general nuisance provisions.

Cat traps are available for hire from the Dog and Cat Centre. A deposit is required to hire the trap along with a weekly fee. A hire agreement form is also completed that outlines the hirers responsibility for the welfare of any animal caught in the trap.

Cats that are wandering at large (usually caught in a cat trap) are impounded at Council's Dog and Cat Centre. If the cat is identified, the owner is contacted to collect their cat and reminded of the requirements of Council's Cat By-law, including council registration. If the cat is not identified, council will hold the cat for 72 hours to allow time for an owner time to claim it. If it is not claimed, the cat is surrendered to RSPCA. The RSPCA accepts most of the unclaimed suitable cats into its rehoming program each year.

The number of cats that are impounded continues to vary from year to year. The number of cats that are safely returned to their owners is low if the cat has no identification. There are still many cats in our community that are stray, or semi-owned (someone feeds a cat but does not take responsibility for it) or unidentified. These stray cats make up most of the cats that are impounded.

It is worthy to note that the number of registered cats in the Whyalla community have continued to increase each year.

Number of cats registered in Whyalla over the last 5 years

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
1694	1452	1383	1221	1180

Cats seized and detained

Total number of cats impounded

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
504	336	329	348	233

Total number of cats returned to owner

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
12	23	18	26	11

Total number of unclaimed cats surrendered by Council for re-homing

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
427	260	231	238	131

In 2018, Whyalla was the first council in South Australia to participate in the National Desexing Network (NDN) program run by the Animal Welfare League in Queensland.

Council has continued this program as part of its overall animal management strategy.

The program provides financial assistance to residents in need by subsidising desexing costs and making it more affordable for low-income earners who would otherwise not be able to afford to desex their dog or cat.

The cost is shared between owners (owner currently pays between \$55 and \$120 depending on the size and whether it is a dog or cat), Council, and the vet.

Benefits to the community include reduction in the overall dog and cat population by reducing unwanted litters, reduced behavioural problems such as aggression, less tendency to roam, and reduced risk of health problems.

This program also provides discounted microchipping when included with the desexing procedure.

7. OBJECTIVES / STRATEGIES / MEASURES (KPI's)

OBJECTIVE 1 – RESPONSIBLE OWNERS

Strategies:

1. Promote dog and cat registrations
2. Promote mandatory microchipping and de-sexing of dogs and cats
3. Promote responsible dog and cat ownership

Strategy 1 – Promote Dog and Cat Registrations

- Work with owners to ensure dogs and cats are registered and that registration is renewed annually

- Continue to assist residents in the use of the state-wide Dogs and Cats Online (DACO) registration system
- Continue to offer rebates for Standard registration, i.e. microchipped and desexed dogs and cats
- Introduce first-year free registration for puppies and kittens registered less than 6 months of age
- Continue regular follow up and door knocking program for unregistered dogs and cats

Strategy 2 – Promote Mandatory microchipping and de-sexing of dogs and cats

- Support discounted microchipping days for dogs and cats
- Investigate feasibility of microchipping dogs and cats before release from the Dog and Cat Centre
- Continue to offer subsidised desexing vouchers for local residents experiencing financial hardship
- Continue regular door knocking program as per available resources
- Monitor and take necessary enforcement action where required on owners who continue to keep un-microchipped and un-desexed dogs and cats

Strategy 3 – Promote Responsible Dog and Cat Ownership

- Encourage self-compliance of animal registration using Dogs and Cats Online
- Provide current information on laws and offences relating to dogs and cats
- Highlight the benefits of pet ownership and compliance with laws
- Provide advice to owners on practical ways to reduce excessive barking

The above strategies support Council's Public Health Plan:

Theme 2: Connection and Support; People in our community feel connected and can access support, services, activities, facilities, and information when needed.

Measures:

- Increase in registration renewals each year
- Higher percentage of residents registering online instead of seeking council assistance

- Increase in registrations for puppies and kittens (first year free encourages owners to enter their animals into DACO)
- Organise at least one discounted microchipping / educational day per year
- Desexing Program continues to be utilised by residents and vouchers are issued on a regular basis
- Increase in microchipped and desexed dogs and cats as a result of identifying owners in DACO
- Expiations are issued following non-compliance by owners
- Council staff are responsive to customer enquiries, social media (regular posts)

OBJECTIVE 2 – EDUCATED COMMUNITY

Strategies:

1. Council information is kept current and up to date
2. Community engagement activities are regularly undertaken
3. Investigate partnerships with other stakeholders and organisations to develop and deliver dog and cat education programs

Strategy 1 – Council Information

- Regularly review Council's website and printed material to ensure accuracy of dog and cat information
- Develop a dedicated animal management page on Council's website that is easy to read, current and informative
- Continue to promote the Dog and Cat Management Board's brochures and publications to the community

Strategy 2 – Community Engagement

- Encourage feedback from residents through website customer submissions, facebook posts and in person
- Conduct regular media and engagement activities to inform the community on various dog and cat issues via:

- media releases
- local radio segments
- pop up stalls
- Ensure Council staff are knowledgeable and helpful when offering advice relating to dog and cat issues

Strategy 3 – Partnerships

- Investigate development of a school holiday program to be run at the Library or Visitor Information Centre during the school holidays to promote responsible dog and cat ownership
- Explore opportunities to partner with the RSPCA to educate the community on roles and responsibilities of individuals, the community, council and welfare organisations
- Liaise with real estate agencies, local vets, pet stores and Housing SA to assist with providing information packs to residents with dogs and cats

The above strategies support Council's Public Health Plan:

Theme 1: Community and Culture; A City that is accessible and culturally inclusive and where residents feel safe, healthy, and connected, and

Theme 2: Connection and Support; People in our community feel connected and can access support, services, activities, facilities, and information when needed.

Measures:

- Council's website is easy to navigate, and residents regularly refer to it for up-to-date information, including links to the Dog and Cat Management Board for general information
- Staff post regular information on Council's Facebook page
- A pop-up stall is held in Westland Shopping Centre periodically to provide information and advice to dog and cat owners
- Animal Management is discussed regularly on programmed local radio segments
- Collaboration with the RSPCA on a range of activities to promote animal welfare and responsible ownership in general (million paws walk, cupcake day, council events, school visits etc.)
- Information packs are supplied to relevant local agencies for new and existing residents



OBJECTIVE 3 – PROACTIVE COUNCIL

Strategies:

1. Reducing nuisance dogs and cats, dog attacks and harassments
2. Improving cat management
3. Enhancing dog friendly public spaces

Strategy 1 – Reducing Nuisance Dogs and Cats, Dog attacks and harassments

- Continue to provide a safe facility for the holding of dogs and cats found wandering at large
- Review Council's animal management services agreement, including seizure and detention of dangerous dogs

- Continue to remind owners to ensure their premises are kept secure to reduce the incidence of dogs and cats wandering
- Remind all dog and cat owners to ensure their contact details in DACO are kept up to date to expediate the safe return of wandering dogs and cats
- Remind cat owners that the Council's Cat By-law has a curfew and cats must be contained to the property between the hours of 10pm to 6am

Strategy 2 – Improving Cat Management

- Continue to educate residents on Council's Cat By-law and its various requirements
- Encourage cat owners to confine their cats to their property at all times
- Liaise with residents to encourage the reporting of stray cat colonies and those who feed stray cats
- Continue to provide a cat trap hire service to assist residents to catch nuisance cats and take them to the Dog and Cat Centre
- Investigate and follow up of official nuisance cat complaints and taking enforcement action where necessary
- Continue to assist the community with unidentified cats by working together with the Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board and Council's Landscape Officer to identify cat colonies and implement trapping programs to eradicate

Strategy 3 – Enhancing Dog Friendly Public Spaces

- Continue to maintain and encourage use of Council's Dog Park on Searle Street/McLennan Avenue, Whyalla Norrie
- Continue to provide dog poo stations in strategic locations, eg. foreshore, dog park, Civic and Wilson parks to ensure dog owners pick up after their dogs
- Identify other parks, gardens and reserves in the city that can be improved to encourage dog walking and socialising
- Investigate walking trails within the city and providing amenities along the way e.g.: installation of water stations designed for dogs, dog poo bag dispensaries and bins stations along walking trails, shade and seating along the way
- Investigate over the life of the Plan updating or installing signage in dog friendly places indicating the 'do's and don'ts' of the area

The above strategies support Council's Public Health Plan:

Theme 1: Community and Culture; A City that is accessible and culturally inclusive and where residents feel safe, healthy, and connected,

Theme 3: Active, Healthy Living; People are using the parks, open spaces, and services to live active and healthy lifestyles,

Theme 4: Healthy People and Healthy Places; The community is protected from public health risks; our natural and built assets are being maintained and sustainability is integral in our programs and decision-making processes.

Measures:

- Fewer dogs and cats found wandering at large
- Fewer incidents of dog attacks and harassments
- Fewer impoundments of dogs and cats
- Reduction in cat colonies reported by the community
- Increased use of the Dog Park
- Reduced incidence of dog faeces in public places



8. APPENDIX: TABLE OF ON-LEASH AND OFF-LEASH PARKS

A 'park' is defined in the Act as:

“a park, garden, reserve or other similar public open space, or a foreshore area, within the area of a council”.



ON-LEASH PARKS

Location/Address	Comments
Whyalla Foreshore Area, including Ada Ryan Gardens	Dogs must be on-leash at all times in these areas, except for beach area along the water line from the Jetty to the mangroves (from the low water mark on the seashore to the seawall) Dogs must be on leash on beach area from 8am to 9pm (summer) and 8am-6pm (winter) Area is well sign posted
Location/Address	Comments
Whyalla Wetlands	Dogs must be on-leash at all times Area is well sign posted

OFF-LEASH PARKS

Location/Address	Comments
Foreshore (from the low water mark on the seashore to the seawall) - beach area along the water line from the Jetty to the mangroves	<p>Dogs can be off-leash and under effective control;</p> <p>Before 8am and after 9pm during Central Daylight Saving Time (summer) and, Before 8am and after 6pm during Central Standard Time (winter)</p> <p>Area is well sign posted</p>
Point Lowly / Stony Point / Murninnie Beaches	Dogs can be off leash and under effective control at any time
Whyalla Dog Park	<p>Dogs can be off leash and under effective control at any time</p> <p>Dog Park Rules are clearly displayed</p>
Jubilee Park Oval	<p>Dogs can be off leash and under effective control at any time</p> <p>Area is well sign posted</p>

9. RELATED DOCUMENTS/APPENDICES

- *Councils Strategic Plan*
- *Councils Regional Public Health Plan*
- *Councils By-laws*
- *Councils Animal Management Policies*



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