











Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan

2026 - 2030



Wodonga Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of the Country. We also acknowledge them as Traditional Owners and Custodians across various lands. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, Elders, children and young people. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and recognise their continuous connections to lands, waters and communities across the country.

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Introduction

About the plan

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act), every council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) as follows.

SECT 68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

S. 68A (1) amended by No. 35/2009 s. 21.

1. Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary, prepare at four-year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
2. A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must:
    a. set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
    b. outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the council's municipal district; and
    c. outline programs, services and strategies which the council intends to pursue in its municipal district:
        I. to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats;
        II. to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation;
        III. to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
        IV. to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
        V. to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats;
        VI. to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and,
        VII. to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations.
    d. provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
    e. provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
    f. provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
3. Every Council must—
    a. review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan;
    b. provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
    c. publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

Overview

Wodonga Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is designed to support the needs of pet owners and their dogs and cats. The plan also aims to encourage responsible pet ownership across the city.

It helps the council manage domestic animals in both urban and rural parts of Wodonga. The Compliance team will deliver this plan by balancing community expectation with the legal requirements under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. They'll use both education and enforcement to promote responsible pet ownership and help people follow the rules.

All councils in Victoria must have a four-year plan to manage dogs and cats, as required by the Act.

How the plan was developed

This plan builds on the outcomes and learnings as set out in the previous version. It is also informed by data relating to complaints, dog attacks, pet registrations and impoundments. Input from the community and key groups such as vets, pet businesses, volunteers, dog trainers and service providers also shaped this plan.

Two phases of community consultation were undertaken to inform the development of this plan.

The first stage sought feedback on the community's concerns and priorities regarding key topics that are raised in the plan, to inform the development of the new one.

Throughout this process, community consultation feedback was carefully reviewed and integrated into the action plan to ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of the community.

The second phase invited feedback on the *Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026 - 2030*.

The aim of the plan

The primary objectives of the DAMP are to recognise the important role pets play in people's lives and to create a safe, shared environment where pets, their owners and the wider community can live well together.

To achieve this, Wodonga Council will:

- Encourage pet owners to follow the rules and act responsibly through education, engagement and enforcement;
- Support the benefits of pet ownership and companionship;
- Improve safety and amenity by reducing problems caused by pets and irresponsible owners;
- Ensure dangerous and restricted-breed dogs follow safety rules;
- Promote the health and welfare of dogs and cats;
- Reduce the number of unwanted pets and the need for euthanasia; and,
- Make sure the council meets its legal responsibilities under the Act.

Council Vision	A vibrant, well-planned city where people, nature and opportunity thrive through connection, resilience and leadership.
Domestic Animal Management Vision	A community where pets are well cared for and responsible ownership ensures the safety of people and animals alike.

About Wodonga

Wodonga covers an area of 433.7 square kilometres in North East Victoria, about 300km from Melbourne. It shares a key location with nearby Albury (in NSW) on the main Melbourne–Sydney freeway and train line.

This plan is designed for the people of Wodonga, a community known for its relaxed and appealing lifestyle. The city features more than 80km of bike and walking paths, as well as scenic parks, gardens and foreshore areas around Lake Hume —including Kookaburra and Jackson point, Ludlows and Ebden reserve. Pet owners also enjoy access to the Murray and Kiewa rivers and Wodonga Creek reserves, making it a great place for pets and outdoor activities.

Wodonga includes the suburbs and rural areas of Bandiana, Baranduda, Barnawartha North, Bonegilla, Castle Creek, Ebden, Gateway Island, Huon Creek, Killara, Leneva, Staghorn Flat (part), West Wodonga and Wodonga itself.



46,561

In 2025, Wodonga's total population is estimated to be 46,561 people.

It is forecast to increase by 16,276 people to 62,837 by 2046.

The number of dwellings is forecast to grow from 18,216 in 2021 to 26,467 in 2046, with the average household size falling from 2.45 to 2.40 by 2046.

This steady growth reflects Wodonga's ongoing development and its appeal as a regional hub in north-east Victoria.

For the life of this plan (2026 to 2030), Wodonga's population is expected to increase from 47,354 to 50,349, an increase of 2995 persons.

Source: Population and household forecasts, 2021 to 2046 .id, February 2025.







Domestic animal statistics and data

Annual statistics at commencement of plan period		
Wodonga	2020 - 2021	2024 - 2025
Number of registered dogs	6715	7767
Number of dangerous dogs	0	1
Number of restricted-breed dogs	0	0
Number of menacing dogs	6	5
Average number of dogs impounded annually	312	253
Average number of registered dogs reunited with owners by rangers (percentage %)	29%	32%
Released – owner (percentage %)	80%	82%
Released – sold (percentage %)	14%	13%
Euthanised (percentage %)	6%	5%

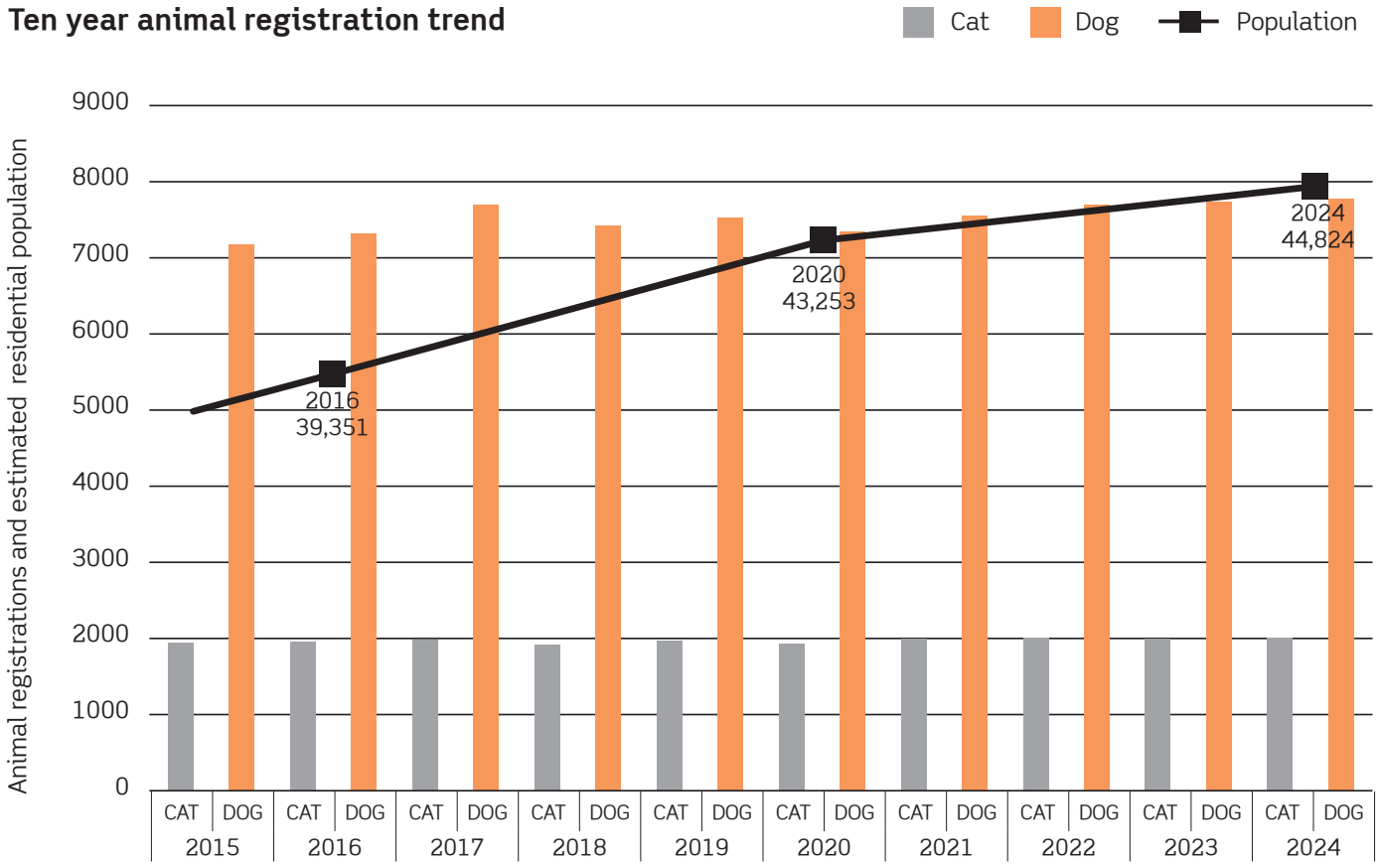
Wodonga infringements			
Year	Infringements issued	Warnings issued	Prosecutions
2020 - 2021	520	14	1
2021 - 2022	411	8	0
2022 - 2023	393	5	0
2023 - 2024	411	7	0
2024 - 2025	296	64	0

Domestic animal business	2024
Registered domestic animal businesses	5
Number of boarding establishments	2
Number of pet shops	2
Number of pounds / shelters	0
Number of dog training establishments	1

Wodonga cats					
Cats	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Complaints	184	178	141	182	133
Impounded	158	161	146	170	178
Released – owner %	29	30	41	38	42
Released – sold %	36	38	31	28	21
Euthanised %	35	32	28	34	37

Domestic animal statistics and data, continued

Ten year animal registration trend



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing

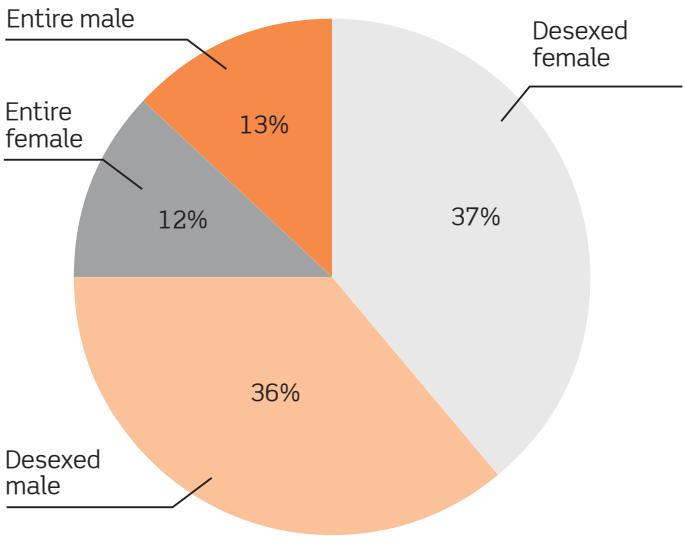
Current local laws and orders	
Order	Date
Introduction of 12 hour cat curfew	January 2001
Mandatory desexing of all cats upon registration	June 2005
Removal of declared dangerous dogs	January 2006
Local Law 1/2014 introduced	July 2014
Order for the Control of Dogs (Appendix one)	September 2020
Local Law 1/2024 introduced	July 2024

Dogs in Wodonga

On average, over the past four years:

- 81 dogs were returned to their owner without being impounded
- 253 dogs were impounded each year
- 198 of those that were impounded were collected
- 34 were rehomed
- 21 were euthanised due to serious behavioural or health concerns

Desexed versus entire dogs in Wodonga



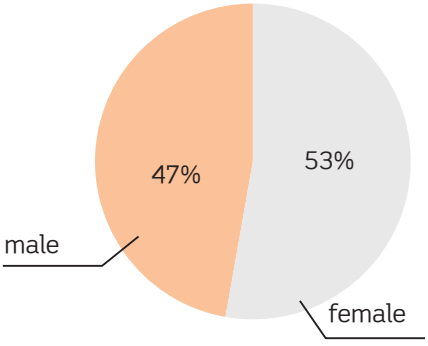
Top 10 registered breeds	
1	Jack Russell
2	Border Collie
3	Labrador
4	Dachshund
5	Cavoodle
6	Staffordshire Terrier
7	Kelpie x
8	Staffordshire Terrier x
9	Jack Russell x
10	Golden Retriever

Cats in Wodonga

On average, over the past four years:

- 154 cats were impounded each year
- 41 were returned to owners
- 51 were rehomed
- 62 were euthanised

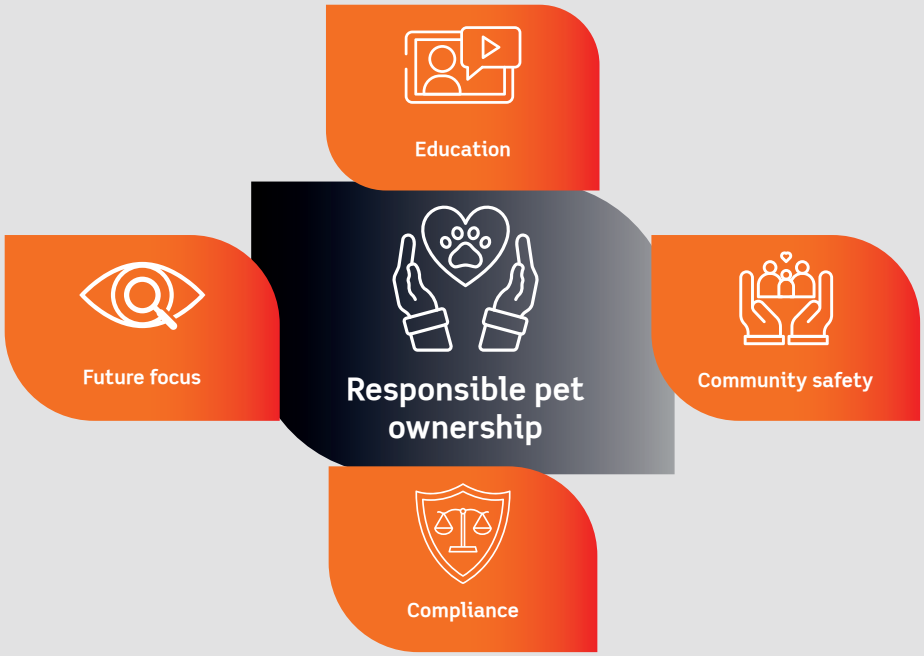
More feral cats have been impounded and euthanised due to more community complaints and increased trap availability.



Semi-owned cats

A contributing factor to cat overpopulation is people feeding cats they don't own. While they mean well, feeding without taking ownership (like desexing or microchipping) keeps the cycle of overbreeding going. These cats often suffer from illness and poor living conditions and add to the overpopulation problem.

Action plan



Responsible pet ownership is guided by four themes.

Education

Through education, the council equips owners with the knowledge to care for and manage their pets responsibly.

Community safety

By prioritising safety, the council fosters a community where people and pets can share public spaces with confidence.

Compliance

Through fair and consistent compliance, the council upholds legislative standards that protect both animals and the broader community.

Future focus

With a strong future focus, the council is building a city where people and their pets thrive in a healthy, safe and resilient community.

1. Responsible pet ownership

Responsible pet ownership is a lifelong commitment to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of a pet. It includes providing appropriate food, shelter, exercise, training and regular veterinary care. Owners are also expected to follow local laws, including pet registration, microchipping, containment and cleaning up after their animals. By fulfilling these responsibilities, pet owners contribute to a safe, respectful and animal-friendly community.

1.1 Responsible dog ownership

Being a responsible dog owner means making sure your dog is registered, microchipped and well cared for — from their health and happiness to their behaviour. It also means being mindful of the community by keeping your dog on-leash when out and about, picking up after them and ensuring they don't cause any problems for others.

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
1.1.1	Enforce and promote leash compliance in public areas.	Spot checks	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
1.1.2	Ensure signage about leash laws and penalties is clear and visible.	Annual review complete	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
1.1.3	Install dog waste bag dispensers and bins in high-traffic areas.	Installation number	✓					✓	
1.1.4	Promote and enforce compulsory registration and microchipping.	Number of registered dogs	✓	✓		✓		✓	
		Response to customer service requests	✓	✓			✓		✓
1.1.5	Ensure rangers are equipped to manage dangerous/aggressive dogs.	Supply of equipment	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
		Mandatory training completed	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓



1.2 Responsible cat ownership

Being a responsible cat owner means making sure your cat is microchipped, desexed and kept safely at home on your property. This keeps them safe, protects our native wildlife and helps keep the community happy. It's also important to give your cat the care they need, prevent nuisance behaviours and make sure they don't roam or breed freely.

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
1.2.1	Continue enforcement of the cat curfew.	Decrease in cat traps issued	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2.2	Promote indoor or contained outdoor cat enclosures (catios) to reduce roaming.	Educational campaign		✓			✓		
1.2.3	Increase the number of sterilised cats.	Number of sterilised cat registrations	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2.4	Reduce nuisance cat complaints.	Number of customer service requests	✓				✓		
1.2.5	Increase council rangers' expertise in cat behaviour and health requirements and ensure they are equipped to deal with stray cats.	Courses completed	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
		Supply of equipment	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓



2. Education

Educating the community about responsible pet ownership is essential to improving animal welfare, reducing nuisance issues and building safer, more connected neighbourhoods. Council offers a range of education options including online resources, social media campaigns and one-on-one engagement with Animal Management Officers to help residents understand their responsibilities and care for their pets responsibly.

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
2.1	Implement regular campaigns to educate residents on responsible pet ownership, including proper care, training and the importance of registration and microchipping.	Cat health and wellbeing campaign		✓		✓			
		Dog health and wellbeing campaign		✓			✓		
		Animal registration renewal campaign		✓				✓	
		Impact of roaming cats on local wildlife and neighbours campaign		✓					✓
		Dog off-leash areas campaign		✓				✓	
		Benefits of desexing campaign		✓			✓		
		Cat curfew campaign		✓		✓			
		Cat trap campaign		✓		✓			
2.2	Provide accessible resources via printed materials, website and social media content.	Initiatives completed	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
2.2.1	Review of all current printed materials and online content.	Review completed	✓	✓			✓		✓
2.3	Promote and enforce compulsory registration and microchipping.	Number of animals registered in municipality	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
2.4	Equip rangers with the knowledge needed to deliver accurate public education.	Education sessions completed	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
2.5	Educate the community about the nature and consequences of dog attacks and rushing incidents.	Initiatives completed	✓	✓				✓	



3. Community safety

The council prioritises community safety by implementing strategies to prevent dog attacks and manage dangerous/menacing dogs effectively. This includes enforcing leash laws, encouraging responsible ownership through education on dog behaviour, training and enrichment, and ensuring all dogs are registered and microchipped to improve the likelihood of their safe return if lost. The council will investigate all dog attack incidents promptly and apply appropriate measures such as restrictions, muzzling requirements or dangerous dog declarations when necessary.

Through ongoing community engagement and targeted programs, the council aims to reduce the risk of dog attacks, protect residents and animals, and foster a safe environment for everyone.

3.1 Reduction of nuisance dog complaints

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
3.1.1	Review barking dog process.	Review completed	✓			✓			
3.1.2	Reduce roaming/ unleashed dogs.	Spot checks completed	✓			✓			
		Decrease in customer service requests	✓			✓			
3.1.3	Respond to customer service requests about nuisance dogs.	Customer service requests completed	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

3.2 Reduction of nuisance cat complaints

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
3.2.1	Undertake a review of cat curfew models in comparable municipalities.	Review completed	✓				✓		
3.2.2	Reduce cat trap usage.	Number of cap traps issued	✓				✓		
3.2.3	Respond to customer service requests about nuisance cats.	Customer service requests completed	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

3.3 Reduction in dog attacks

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
3.3.1	Maintain ongoing monitoring and professional development for rangers regarding dog attacks and the procedures for declaring dogs.	Professional development completed	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3.2	Increase adherence to compliance regulations for menacing dogs.	Number of declared menacing dogs	✓				✓		
3.3.3	Aim to reduce the number of dangerous dogs declared within the municipality, while exploring future options for improved tracking and management.	Number of declared dangerous dogs	✓					✓	
3.3.4	Ensure enclosure requirements within the municipality are fully aligned with legislative standards.	Spot checks completed on declared dogs	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3.5	Pursue court prosecutions where necessary to address serious dog attacks and ensure community safety.	Prosecutions undertaken	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

3.4 Promote and encourage increased reporting

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
3.4.1	Promote the reporting of dog attacks.	Number of customer service requests received	✓	✓		✓		✓	
3.4.2	Promote the reporting of dogs at large (roaming).	Number of customer service requests received	✓	✓			✓		✓

4. Compliance

In Victoria, responsible pet ownership is supported by a range of compliance measures designed to protect animals, people and the environment. These include mandatory registration, microchipping, desexing requirements and local laws around containment, leashing and nuisance behaviours — All focused on community safety, education and a future-focused approach.

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
4.1	Investigate complaints about nuisance or dangerous dogs promptly.	Number of dog complaints	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
4.2	Patrol off-leash dog parks regularly.	Patrols conducted	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
		Animal registration spot checks	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
4.3	Manage animal registration database to ensure all information is consistent with internal and external stakeholders.	Accurate records	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
		Victorian Dangerous Dog Register (VDDR)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
		Central Animal Records (CAR)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
4.4	Review Dangerous Dog Policy.	Review completed	✓			✓			
4.4.1	Investigate housing dangerous/menacing dogs within the municipality.	Investigation complete	✓				✓		
4.5	Ensure processes and procedures align with current legislation.	Review completed	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
4.6	Maintain complete registration compliance for all domestic animal businesses within the municipality.	Domestic Animal Businesses registered	✓			✓			
4.7	Investigate any domestic animal businesses that may not be currently registered.		✓			✓			

5. Future focus

Wodonga Council's plans focus on building a safe, connected community where responsible pet ownership supports people and their pets.

In Victoria, Animal Compliance Officers receive regular training to uphold legislation, support animal welfare and promote responsible pet ownership with professionalism.

5.1 Partnerships

Expand and deepen local partnerships in the municipality to foster strong, collaborative relationships.

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
5.1.1	Expand and deepen partnerships with local registered animal care facilities, veterinarians, animal rescues and surrounding councils.	Number of initiatives completed		✓			✓		

5.2 Service planning and staff development

Ensure service delivery meets community needs and legislative requirements. Provide ongoing training and support to empower rangers to uphold high standards of care and professionalism.

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
5.2.1	Undertake service planning.	Service planning complete	✓	✓			✓		
5.2.2	Provide training and development opportunities.	Number of courses completed	✓	✓				✓	

5.3 Grant and funding opportunities

Actions		Indicators	Deliver	Partner	Advocate	Year			
						1	2	3	4
5.3.1	Explore external grants and funding opportunities for desexing programs and microchipping sessions.	Initiatives completed	✓	✓	✓				✓



CITY OF WODONGA VIC