

(Page 40) LIVE Item 8, Ordinary Meeting, 26.08.25

ITEM NO: 8

SUBJECT: **ADOPTION OF THE COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-2029**

FILE NO: F16021 - 25/145653

Service: Environmental Health & Compliance Service

Recommendation:

1. That the Council adopts the enclosed Companion Animals Management Plan 2025-2029.

Report by *Director Environment & Planning Services*:

Reason for report - The purpose of this report is to enable the Council to consider the main issues raised during the exhibition of the draft Companion Animals Management Plan (the Plan). It recommends that the Plan (Enclosure 1) be adopted with minor amendments.

Background

The Council adopted the following recommendation at its meeting on the [27 May 2025](#):

1. That the Council notes the [review of the outcomes of the 2021-2025 Companion Animals Management Plan](#).
2. That the [Council endorses the draft 2025-2029 Companion Animals Management Plan for public exhibition for a period of twenty-eight \(28\) days](#); and
3. That the Council receives a [further report](#) following the public exhibition period.

[Minute no. 90]

This report addresses Item 3 of the Council resolution. A notice of exhibition was published in the local paper at the start of the exhibition period, and the document was also made available on Council's 'Have Your Say' (HYS) website for 28 days, from the 11 June to 10 July 2025. During this time, the website recorded 101 visits, with 63 document downloads. In response, 15 unique submissions were received. Some of the feedback also included or referenced submissions made to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on Cat Management.

Summary of submissions

A summary of the issues raised under the key themes outlined in the Plan, with responses to each issue, is as follows:

1. General feedback

1.1 Requests to extend the 28-day exhibition period to three months, citing strong community interest and level of community advocacy on cat management.

(Page 41) The CAMP guides actions that balance enforcement and education, and the rights of pet owners and non-owners; it is not a prescriptive document. The level of consultation is in line with the Council's Community Engagement Strategy and matches the standard exhibition period for the

previous Plans. In this context, an extension of time is not considered necessary given the type of document and the level of feedback received.

1.2 Overall, the document was well received, with several changes identified to correct or improve clarity of content. Changes have been made to clarify and / or correct content including a request to add a statement that the Plan be updated to align with legislative changes should that occur during the lifecycle of the document. These changes are minor and are not expected to have any material impact from the exhibited version.

2. Microchip and register

2.1 Request for more animals to be registered and extend subsidies to the wider community to desex and register pets. Council has successfully partnered with animal welfare organisations to run targeted, subsidised programs for registration and desexing that meet the funding body's criteria. The Plan also includes an action to implement social media campaigns to boost registration rates and encourage pet owners to keep their records up to date on the NSW Pet Registry.

3. Community living

3.1 Limit on the number of cats and dogs allowed (some for and against). The Plan gives guidance on the number of cats and dogs recommending no more than three per property. This does not mean that the keeping of animals in excess of these numbers is prohibited rather a range of criteria – including space, environmental conditions, animal wellbeing, etc., are considered before enforcement action is taken.

3.2 Barking dogs with absent owners. A key theme of the CAMP is responsible pet ownership and strategies have been included in the document and content added to Council's website about 'keeping dogs happy'. An existing action is to target education in areas having higher complaint profiles and pet population density.

4. **Wildlife protection**

4.1 Declare the whole of the LGA a Category 2 wildlife protection area: prohibits cats and allows dogs on leash on formed tracks, pathways or roads within that area. Unless there is a clear connection to protecting a species of wildlife, justifying this would be difficult. Implementation costs would also be significant. Protecting wildlife is a key theme of the Plan, and Council will stay alert to any legislative changes, noting that there are existing opportunities for specific sites to be declared a 'Wildlife Protection Area'.

4.2 Biased towards rights of domestic animals over native animals. The Council at its meeting on the 29 October 2024, reaffirmed its recognition of 'animals as sentient beings' and the 'Rights of Nature'. Both statements honour the deep interrelations of all life and recognise that the natural world is just as entitled to exist and evolve as humanity.

4.3 Introduce compulsory cat curfew and containment strategies. A key theme of the Plan is responsible pet ownership - successful strategies aimed at 'Keeping Cats Safe at Home' will continue as opportunities arise. The Council will also remain alert to a legislative response (if any) arising from the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on Cat Management.

4.4 Observation based negative impacts on wildlife – need for better resourced program to remove feral cats and dogs. **Management of feral populations is outside the scope of the Plan.**

5. Public spaces

5.1 Irresponsible dog ownership: Observations of wandering off leash in bushland areas with little regard for non-pet owners; not picking up dog faeces; use of other resident's bins as receptacles; the number of dogs at outdoor eating tables and in prohibited areas; smell of cat urine in unexpected places. The exhibited Plan includes actions for targeted Ranger patrols of dog-free recreation areas. Additionally, the Plan aims to raise awareness about responsible pet management and the issues that come with community living.

5.2 Nuisance orders should be issued for cats that are habitually at large – keep cats on a leash in public spaces. Currently, there are limited provisions when it comes to enforcement under the Companion Animals Act. These relate to noise and property damage.

6. Impound services

The limit on the number of spaces for surrendered pets at the Blue Mountains Animal Care Centre (BMACC) ie., two and only in exceptional circumstances (ie., hardship). Request priority for surrenders over accepting dogs and cats from other pounds or facilities beyond the local government area (LGA) particularly when the impact could lead to increased dumping of animals.

Local government has clear responsibilities for stray and seized pets. A discussion point in the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on Pounds is the number of surrenders following the COVID-driven demand for pets. Several reasons were identified, including a lack of personal responsibility, animal behaviours, rental issues, and cost of living pressures. An action in the exhibited Plan is to explore ways that BMACC can help to keep pets safe and in a home environment, whether through a foster care program, home to home transfer, or other outreach services.

Where genuine hardship applies BMACC has a limited number of spaces available. Without limits on surrenders or the cost offsets provided by the partner Council's fee-for-service arrangement, service costs would increase or our ability to provide core care would be compromised.

(Page 43) Sustainability assessment

Effects	Positive	Negative
Environmental	Irresponsible animal ownership can cause issues that adversely impact community living and the environment. The document outlines educational actions that promote keeping pets safe and at home.	Nil
Social	The CAMP seeks to address the lifelong responsibilities of animal ownership.	Nil
Economic	Nil	There are economic impacts resulting from pet ownership and the related regulatory responsibilities. This is weighed against the social benefit of companion animals.
Governance	The document takes a holistic and strategic approach to companion animals management. It demonstrates how the Council meets its obligations under the Companion Animals Act 1998.	

Financial implications

The Plan outlines a series of key actions that are within the budgeted position. Extension opportunities will be taken where independent funding is provided.

Legal and risk-management issues for the Council

The Companion Animals Management Plan sets out how the Council proposes to discharge its legal responsibilities to the community. There are no foreseeable legal issues for Council in adopting the Plan.

External consultation

A notice of exhibition was published in the local paper at the start of the exhibition period, and the document was also made available on Council's 'Have Your Say' (HYS) website for 28 days, from the 11 June to 10 July 2025.

Alignment with Delivery Program and/or Operational Plan

The document aligns with the Delivery Program principal activity D40201.01 – Ensure living and working environments in the city are safe and healthy.

Conclusion

The 2025-2029 draft Companion Animals Management Plan provides a framework to guide the Council's actions and obligations with respect to dogs and cats. This is the fifth strategic document of its kind. The Council adopted the first Plan in June 2008. It is not a statutory requirement, but it does assist a council to demonstrate how it meets its obligations under Section 6A of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (the Act), which requires, amongst other things, that a council promote awareness of the requirements of the Act with respect to the ownership of companion animals.

(Page 44) Following the review of community feedback, it is recommended that the draft Plan be adopted with minor amendments. This plan is largely guided by legislation and seeks to balance the rights of pet owners and non-pet owners through education and regulation.

ATTACHMENTS/ENCLOSURES

1 Enclosure - Final 2025-2029 CAMP 25/163028 Enclosure

Points to challenge them with.

1. 1 month review – standard for council. Bob asked for 6 to 8 months as important to BM residents. BMCC said no need.
2. Advertise over one month in gazette and bmcc have your say – how many people use these forms of media so would see these 'ads'?
- 3.