

## Review of Cat Management

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### Executive Summary

1. This report responds to the Future Melbourne Committee's (FMC) resolution from 19 March 2024, requesting an update and advice on the role of cat containment in Council's next Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP).
2. Given the strong support from the community for new cat management controls, this report also seeks endorsement for proposed cat management controls across the municipality, including mandatory desexing and containment orders.
3. The proposed cat management controls are informed by extensive community engagement conducted in July and August 2024, which received 1,758 contributions and six written submissions.
4. The feedback indicates strong community support for cat containment, particularly for night-time curfews (85 per cent support) and prohibitions in environmentally sensitive areas (81 per cent support).
5. Additionally, mandatory desexing is recommended to address the issue of unowned and semi-owned cat colonies. At the same time, 134 of the 5,454 registered cats in the municipality are not desexed – 84 per cent of the community supported mandatory cat desexing.
6. The report recommends that new Municipal Orders are issued that relate to mandatory desexing of cats, containment of cats to their premises and prohibiting cats from environmentally sensitive areas. The report also outlines the process for publication, communication, and enforcement.
7. The proposal aligns with guidance from the Victorian Government agency Animal Welfare Victoria and the Victorian Cat Management Strategy, published in December 2024.
8. Any work associated with the proposal can be delivered within existing resources and there will be no financial implication to the City of Melbourne.
9. Management note that City of Melbourne is one of the 'Metropolitan 9' (M9) councils. Of the 'M9' cohort, Port Phillip City Council and Yarra City Council have introduced cat curfews and mandatory desexing. Darebin City Council and Stonnington City Council have introduced a cat curfew but not mandatory desexing. Management acknowledges the importance of collaborating with neighbouring councils, especially those with like policies already in place, when introducing and enforcing the proposed orders.

### Recommendation from management

10. That the Future Melbourne Committee resolves to:
  - 10.1. Endorse Council to make a municipal order under Section 25(2) of the Act requiring cats to be contained to their property at all times
  - 10.2. Endorse Council to make a municipal order under Section 10A(1) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requiring the mandatory desexing of cats
  - 10.3. Endorse Council to make a municipal order under Section 26 of the Act prohibiting cats from environmentally sensitive areas at all times
  - 10.4. Request that these orders be implemented from 1 October 2025, allowing for a communication campaign notifying cat owners of these orders and allowing time for them to comply.

### Purpose

11. The purpose of this report is to respond to the resolution by the Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) on 19 March 2024, requesting a report from management with an update and advice on the role of cat containment in Council's next Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP), due in December 2025 (refer Attachment 1 for the resolution made on 19 March 2024).
12. Following strong community support for controls on cats, this report also seeks Future Melbourne Committee endorsement for new cat controls across the municipality including mandatory desexing, the containment of cats to their premises and the exclusion of cats from environmentally sensitive areas.

### **Background**

13. Council can, by resolution, make an order under Section 10A(1) of the Act to prohibit registration or the renewal of the registration of a cat unless it is desexed.
14. There are exemptions set out in Section 10B(1) of the Act whereby cats are not required to be desexed, such as; if they are used by a registered breeder, they are a member of an applicable organisation and the animal is registered with that organisation or there is written veterinarian advice that the health of the cat is likely to be significantly prejudiced if it is desexed.
15. Council can, by resolution, make an order under Section 25(2) of the Act to introduce the requirement for cats to be securely confined to the owner's premises, in a specified part of, or the entire municipality. There are two main types of containment laws: 24/7 confinement or a night-time curfew.
16. Council can, by resolution, make an order under Section 26 of the Act prohibiting cats from environmentally sensitive areas.
17. As of January 2025, there are 5454 cats registered in the City of Melbourne, with 74% registered to apartments therefore a low roaming risk. 134 cats, 2 per cent of those registered are not desexed. In 2024 the City of Melbourne received 56 reports of roaming cats, most of these were reported in North Melbourne where there is a prevalence of unowned or semi-owned cat colonies.

### **Key considerations**

18. Community engagement occurred in July and August 2024 seeking feedback on cat management within the City of Melbourne, including seeking feedback on mandatory cat desexing and cat containment. A total of 1758 contributions were received via the online survey and 6 written submissions were received via email.
19. Community engagement revealed overwhelming support for containment; 76 per cent of responders supported cat containment in general, 85 per cent of responders supports cat containment at night and 81 per cent of responders supported cats being prohibited from environmentally sensitive areas and 58 per cent of responders supports cat containment at all times (24/7).
20. Management is about to commence preparation of its *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029* with evaluation of cat management controls to be included in the plan. This draft plan will be presented to FMC mid-year for feedback, before finalising the plan and submitting it to the Victorian Government before December 2025.
21. Management sought guidance from Animal Welfare Victoria and the Australian Veterinary Association when undertaking the review of cat management. The guidance provided from Animal Welfare Victoria supported the provisions under the Act which enables Council to tailor their animal management services based on consultation with their community. The Australian Veterinary Association promotes cats being confined to their property, provided they have appropriate enrichment and that cat owners are educated on ensuring the well-being of cats and acknowledges that management of cats that roam across municipal boundaries may be especially challenging.
22. The City of Melbourne currently has large populations of semi-owned and unowned cats in the Municipality, whereby there is currently no strategy to sustainably manage these populations to reduce their numbers. While the current proposal does not specifically address the management of the population of unowned

cats, guidance will be sought from state policy in this regard and incorporated into the review of the *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029*.

23. The introduction of orders prohibiting cats from environmentally sensitive areas will aid City of Melbourne in achieving its goals set out in its Urban Forest and Nature in The City Strategies. Our parks, gardens and waterways are home to a wide range of wildlife species that are at risk from predation of roaming cats. Management will work with key stakeholders to identify areas where the prohibition of cats will actively protect wildlife populations and support positive environmental outcomes.
24. Management continues to work with surrounding councils to better understand outcomes of current cat management orders. Management understands that the enforcement of these controls has been difficult to manage in Council areas where there are cat containment laws and acknowledges that management of cats that roam across municipal boundaries may be especially challenging.
25. The Victorian Government published the *Victorian Cat Management Strategy 2025-2035* in December 2024. The Strategy outlines the State's plan for improving cat welfare, promoting responsible cat ownership reducing the negative environmental impacts of cats over the course of a decade. The short to medium-term goals outlined in the Strategy closely align with what management are seeking to achieve by this proposal; the introduction of cat containment, increasing cat desexing rates and a reduction of the impacts of semi-owned and unowned cats on the community. Management sees the expansion of mandatory desexing and containment of cats as an opportunity collaborate with the State Government in delivering these goals.
26. Management recognises that the introduction of this policy means significant change for cats and their owners. Management acknowledges their role in supporting the community and stakeholders to navigate these changes, as well as ensuring that residents are equipped to comply with the proposed order. Some of the initiatives that Management will explore include subsidised desexing schemes, education materials and programs, a communication campaign and other initiatives to help the community comply.

### Legal

27. Council can by resolution make orders in accordance with the Act to;
  - 27.1. Under Section 10A(1), prohibit registration or the renewal of the registration of a cat unless it is desexed. Section 10B(1) sets out the exemptions that would apply to an order making the desexing of cats mandatory.
  - 27.2. Under Section 25(2), introduce the requirement for cats to be securely confined to the owner's premises.
  - 27.3. Under Section 26, prohibit cats from any public place within the municipality. This instrument can be used to prohibit cats from environmentally sensitive areas.
28. Council already has an order in existence under Section 26(2) of the Act relating to the restraint of dogs in public places. Council may need to review this municipal order to see if it needs to be revoked and reinstated with provisions that prohibit cats from environmentally sensitive areas.

### Finance

29. Any work associated with the proposal can be delivered within existing resources and there will be no financial implication to the City of Melbourne.
30. The financial implications because of the recommendation from management are in line with the Council's Annual Plan and Budget Procedure and procurement policy.

**Conflict of interest**

31. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

**Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities**

32. The recommendation contained in this report is compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006* as it does not raise any human rights issues.

**Health and Safety**

33. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

**Consultation**

34. The proposed cat management controls are informed by extensive community engagement conducted in July and August 2024, which received 1,758 contributions and 6 written submissions. The response from the local community was overwhelmingly supportive of cat desexing and some form of cat containment. An overview of the community engagement and the resulting findings can be found in the Cat Management Community Engagement Summary Report (refer Attachment 2 of this report).
35. Consultation included key stakeholders and partners, including Animal Welfare Victoria, Australian Veterinary Association, The Lost Dogs Home and the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation.

**Relevance to Council Plan and Council Policies**

36. Introducing the recommended policy, Council would be achieving its objective to investigate introducing an order requiring the mandatory desexing of cats as set out our Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025.
37. Council is required to submit its Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029 to the State in December 2025. Management commits to include an objective in this plan to evaluate and review the effectiveness of the proposed orders.
38. The proposed orders will assist Council in achieving objectives outlined in City of Melbourne's Urban Forest and Nature in The City Strategies. These Strategies seek to ensure protection of vulnerable species, increase in biodiversity and improve ecosystem health and resilience within the municipality. By introducing orders that require cats to be contained to the owner's property we reduce the predation of wildlife perpetrated by cats.

**Social and environmental impacts****Social impacts**

39. In 2024 the City of Melbourne received 56 reports of roaming cats. Some of these reports related to owned cats trespassing on neighbouring properties. Trespassing cats can cause property damage, fights with animals residing at other properties and neighbourly disputes. By introducing the proposed orders, we aim to address the issue of trespassing cats, achieve greater welfare outcomes for our pets and increase social harmony.
40. Cat containment leads to numerous positive welfare outcomes for the cats themselves. Cats that are contained are not at risk of injury or death due to traffic collisions, reduces their likelihood of being involved in fights with other animals, reduces their exposure to diseases and parasites and prevents avoidable impoundment of animals. Introducing cat containment can lead to better welfare outcomes for cats which leads to benefits for the owner.
41. In line with the proposed orders, management will seek to introduce a program of education and evidence-based behaviour change initiatives targeted at cat owners. This program will seek to reinforce the benefits of cat desexing and containment, responsible cat ownership principles and the positive impacts that these policies have on wildlife and the environment. Education campaigns can highlight environmentally sensitive

areas where cats will be prohibited and provide greater context to our community about the importance of the preservation efforts at these locations.

### **Gender Impact Assessment**

42. A Gender Impact Assessment has been completed and recommendations from this will be implemented into this program, this includes supporting the safety and wellbeing of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, people of diverse ethnicities and faith groups and vulnerable people.

### **Environmental impacts**

43. Urbanisation has numerous well known negative impacts on wildlife and our natural environment, including reduction in green spaces, habitat fragmentation and pollution. Roaming cats pose additional challenges and threats to native wildlife and ecosystems. Cats prey on small animals, including native species, and are estimated to kill millions of mammals, birds, and reptiles annually. Allowing cats to roam undermines environmental conservation efforts made by council, including those aimed at increasing biodiversity and increasing the populations of vulnerable species within the municipality.
44. The proposed orders aim to reduce predation of native species by ensuring all cats are prohibited from environmentally sensitive areas and by keeping them securely confined to the owner's premises.

### **Attachment List**

1. MAR2420RESOLUTIONS [6.1.1 - 4 pages]
2. Final community engagement summary for FMC report [6.1.2 - 22 pages]



## Resolutions of the Future Melbourne Committee meeting held on Tuesday 19 March 2024

### Agenda item 6.1

#### Proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C447: 192-200 Arden Street North Melbourne

##### Resolved:

1. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 1.1. Requests authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit Planning Scheme Amendment C447 in accordance with the Planning and Environment Act 1987, and in accordance with the attachments to the report from management (refer to Attachment 3 of the report from management).
  - 1.2. Authorises the General Manager Strategy, Planning and Climate Change to make any further minor editorial and referencing changes to Planning Scheme Amendment C447 prior to submission to the Minister for Planning for authorisation.

### Agenda item 6.2

#### Moonee Ponds Creek Advocacy Plan for Improvement Projects

##### Resolved:

1. That the Future Melbourne Committee resolves:
  - 1.1. Notes the publication of the new interactive webpage, which includes the information within the Moonee Ponds Creek Project Information Table provided in Attachment 2 of the report from management.
  - 1.2. Directs that the webpage be updated at least monthly to ensure that the information is current, until such time as Council (or delegated Committee) resolves otherwise.
  - 1.3. Notes that management will continue to explore projects and the associated criteria for grant funding opportunities through the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program, and any relevant applications will be referred through the usual capital works budget process.
  - 1.4. Requests that the Lord Mayor write to the following Ministers by 22 March 2024 to convey the City of Melbourne's significant concerns regarding inaction on the following projects, and alerting the Ministers to the Committee's intention to consider the matter (and responses from the Ministers) again on 21 May 2024:
    - 1.4.1. The Minister for Development Victoria – in relation to the ongoing lack of funding and commitment to reinstate the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail in Docklands, removed to facilitate the Docklands Studios expansion;
    - 1.4.2. The Planning Minister – in relation to the extensive delays in authorising exhibition of Planning Scheme Amendment C417 (Macaulay Urban Renewal); and
    - 1.4.3. The Planning Minister – in relation to the extensive delays in publishing, funding and implementing any Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan; and

- 1.4.4. The Treasurer – in relation to West Gate Tunnel Project contractors not implementing the State Government's commitment to replace removed trees within the municipality at a rate of 5:1.
- 1.5. Directs that a report be presented to this Committee on 21 May 2024 setting out:
  - 1.5.1. The replies from Ministers to the letters described at paragraph 13.4 or, where no response has been received, a note to that effect;
  - 1.5.2. The "prioritisation and delivery plan for two new pedestrian and bicycle crossings of the Moonee Ponds Creek" committed to in the 24-25 Annual Plan;
  - 1.5.3. Proposed next steps in relation to advancing each of the 12 projects as well as the overarching advocacy plan requested in all parts of the resolution at paragraph 1(B)2.3 of the resolution of the Committee on 5 December 2023; and
  - 1.5.4. Recommendations in relation to using the City of Melbourne's double page advertising space in the North West City News to alert the local community to all matters relating to Moonee Ponds Creek improvement projects, the causes of their delays, and how community members can contribute in advocacy efforts.

### **Agenda item 6.3**

#### **Potential North Melbourne Town Hall Public Open Space**

##### **Procedural Motion - Resolved:**

That the Future Melbourne Committee resolves to defer the item Potential North Melbourne Town Hall Public Open Space to the Future Melbourne Committee meeting to be held on 23 April 2024.

### **Agenda item 6.4**

#### **Cat Containment**

##### **Resolved:**

1. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 1.1. Approves the integration of cat containment and exclusion orders into the community consultation activities already planned for July 2024 on the mandatory desexing of cats.
  - 1.2. Requests that Management explores integrating cat containment and exclusion orders as part of the planned 2024 investigation into making an order under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 for the mandatory desexing of cats.
  - 1.3. Requests management work with Animal Welfare Victoria and the Australian Veterinary Association to undertake a review of cat containment and exclusion measures in Victoria.
  - 1.4. Notes that management will continue to work with surrounding councils to better understand outcomes of current mandatory orders.
  - 1.5. Requests a report from management by March 2025 with an update and advice on the role of cat containment and exclusion orders in Council's next Domestic Animal Management Plan, due in December 2025.
  - 1.6. Notes the potential for these measures to be superseded if there is intervention at the State Government level.

### **Agenda item 6.5**

## Creative Funding Framework 2024-2030

### Resolved:

1. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 1.1. Approves the Creative Funding Framework 2024–30 (Attachment 2 of the report from management) subject to the following changes:
    - 1.1.1. On page 3, delete the word “Chair”.
    - 1.1.2. On page 5, replace “Council’s upcoming First Nations Strategy will sit” with “Council may soon agree to create a First Nations Strategy to sit”.
    - 1.1.3. On page 9, specify that the maximum grant for a multi-year arts grant is “up to \$330,000 per year\*”.
    - 1.1.4. On page 9, add text below the table: “\*Council will determine whether multi-year grants and, by extension, the multi-year arts grants funding stream as a whole, will be subject to annual indexation. This will occur as part of the budget process for 2024-25.”

## Agenda item 6.6

### Outcomes of the City Economy Summit

#### Resolved:

1. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 1.1. Approves the 11 recommendations of the City Economy Advisory Committee, as an outcome of the City Economy Summit.
  - 1.2. Requests that management continue to liaise with the City Economy Advisory Committee as delivery plans are developed for the recommended actions.
  - 1.3. Requests that management communicate the recommended actions to City Economy Summit attendees.
  - 1.4. Requests that management update Council via briefing paper on the progress of the recommended actions before September 2024.
  - 1.5. Requests that management consider how best to incorporate the recommended advocacy actions into the City of Melbourne’s advocacy priorities.

## Agenda item 7.1

### Notice of Motion: Cr Dr Olivia Ball, Advocacy for Housing First Based Programs in the City of Melbourne

#### Resolved:

1. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 1.1. Applauds the success of the From Homelessness to a Home (‘H2H’) program, which since early 2021 has found permanent, supported housing for 1,845 unhoused people, including in the City of Melbourne.
  - 1.2. Notes that the human right to adequate housing must be realised progressively, and deliberately retrogressive measures may constitute a breach of human rights;

- 1.3. Notes that the City of Melbourne is currently consulting the community on its draft Homelessness Strategy 2024-2030, a strategy founded on the right to adequate housing and the principles:
  - (a) a city where everyone has a home,
  - (b) where no-one is left behind, and
  - (c) a city unified to end homelessness,which will be undermined if net funding for homelessness services and pathways out of homelessness is cut;
- 1.4. Maintains that programs for people facing homelessness need to be expanded in the City of Melbourne rather than contracted; and
- 1.5. Requests the Lord Mayor to write to the Premier and Minister for Housing to urge them to increase net funding for 'Housing First'-based programs until such time we achieve 'functional zero' homelessness in the City of Melbourne.

# CAT MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT – PHASE 1

SEPTEMBER 2024



## **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners**

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they have maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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3 [melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://melbourne.vic.gov.au)

## Executive Summary: Overview and Key Findings

Over four weeks in July and August 2024, Council invited community feedback on Cat Management, this included mandatory cat desexing and cat containment. A total of 1758 contributions were received via the online survey. We also received six written submissions via email.

This document summarises the feedback received. Providing validation and clear direction regarding next steps to inform the draft proposal for Cat Management in the City of Melbourne.

### Findings

The response from the local community was overwhelmingly supportive of cat desexing and some form of cat containment.

Further detail on the feedback is available in this report.

### Next Steps

The outcome of this community engagement is to develop a draft proposal to explore mandatory cat desexing and cat containment.

## Project Background

Over four weeks in July and August 2024, Council invited community to provide feedback on the possibility of introducing mandatory cat desexing and some form of cat containment to their owners property.

The project asked for feedback in relation to:

- Mandatory Cat Desexing: all cats and kittens would need to be desexed before they can be registered with the City of Melbourne.
- Mandatory Cat Containment
  - Nighttime Cat Curfew: cats must be securely confined to their owner's property during certain hours. E.g. sunset to sunrise
  - Full-time Cat Curfew: cats must be securely confined to their owner's property at all times.

Feedback was received via Participate Melbourne through a short survey and the option to provide a written submission directly to the Animal Management team.

### Background

The City of Melbourne's Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-25 states council will explore making an order requiring the mandatory desexing of cats. In March 2024 the Future Melbourne Committee approved the integration of cat containment into the investigation, including community consultation.

### Methodology

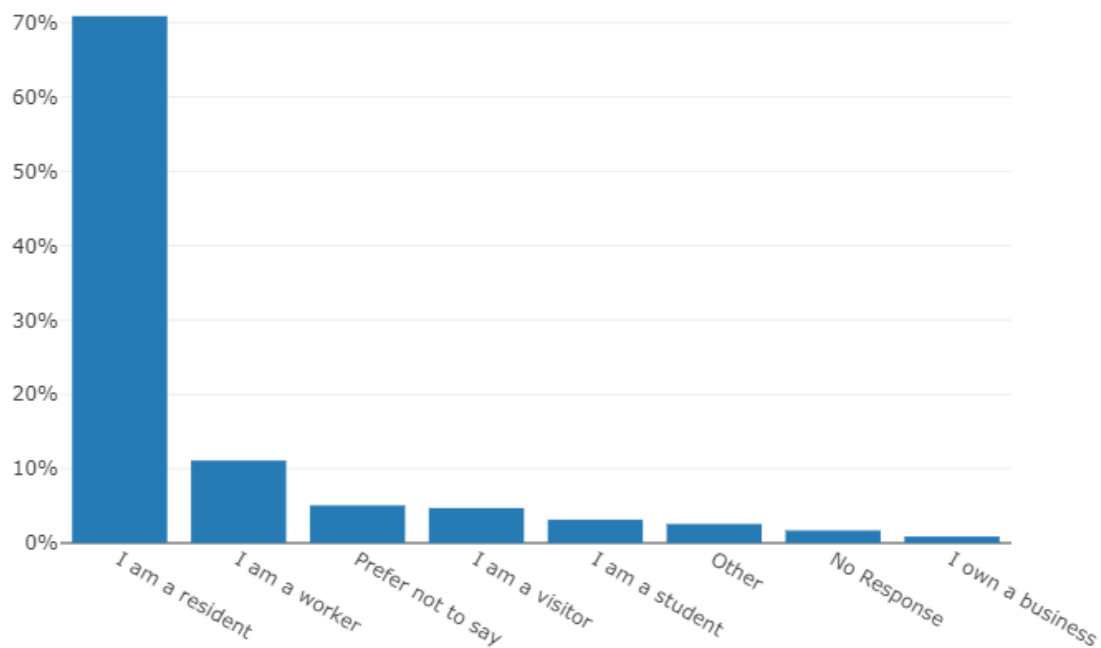
Responses were encouraged through the Participate Melbourne website, while information was also gathered through written submissions emailed directly to the Animal Management team for consideration.

The invitation to participate in the community engagement was promoted through a range of mediums including:

- Participate Melbourne website
- Online survey with questions asking the community how they feel about issues surrounding cats in the City of Melbourne and if they support mandatory cat desexing and various forms of cat containment.
- Information page and frequently asked questions
- Social media campaign
- Email campaign to key stakeholders including City of Melbourne's contracted pound The Lost Dogs' Home and vets operating in the municipality.
- Text message campaign to registered pet owners in the 2024/25 registration period.

## Who we heard from

Through the engagement participants had the opportunity to engage online through the Participate Melbourne page and through written submissions via email. This is a snapshot of who we heard from:

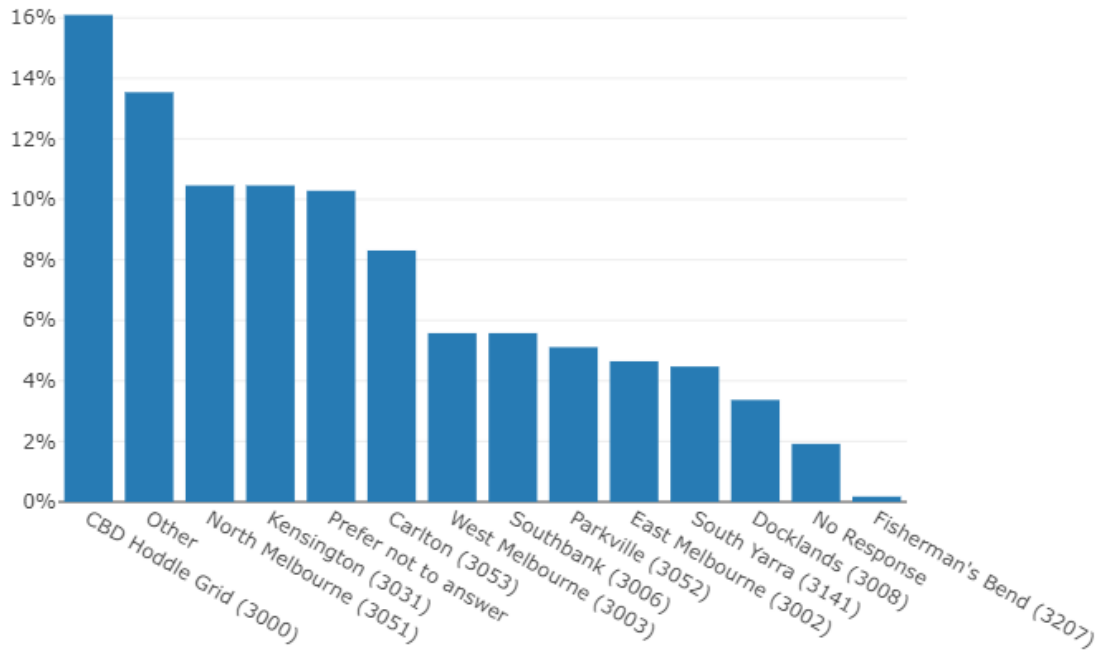


**Fig 1. Connection to CoM**

Data from the bar chart shows the distribution of respondents based on their relationship to a particular area:

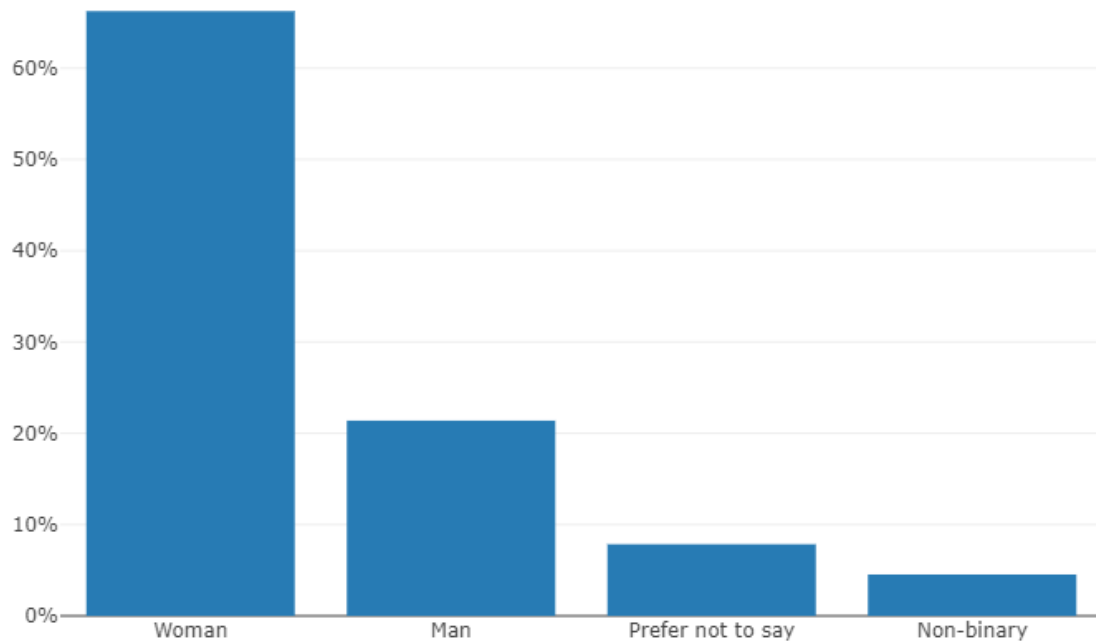
- Approximately 70% of respondents are residents.
- Approximately 10% are workers.
- Approximately 5% prefer not to say.
- Approximately 5% are visitors.
- Approximately 3% are students.
- Approximately 2% fall into the "Other" category.
- Approximately 2% did not respond.
- Less than 1% own a business.

This indicates that the majority of respondents are residents, with smaller proportions being workers, visitors, students, and others.



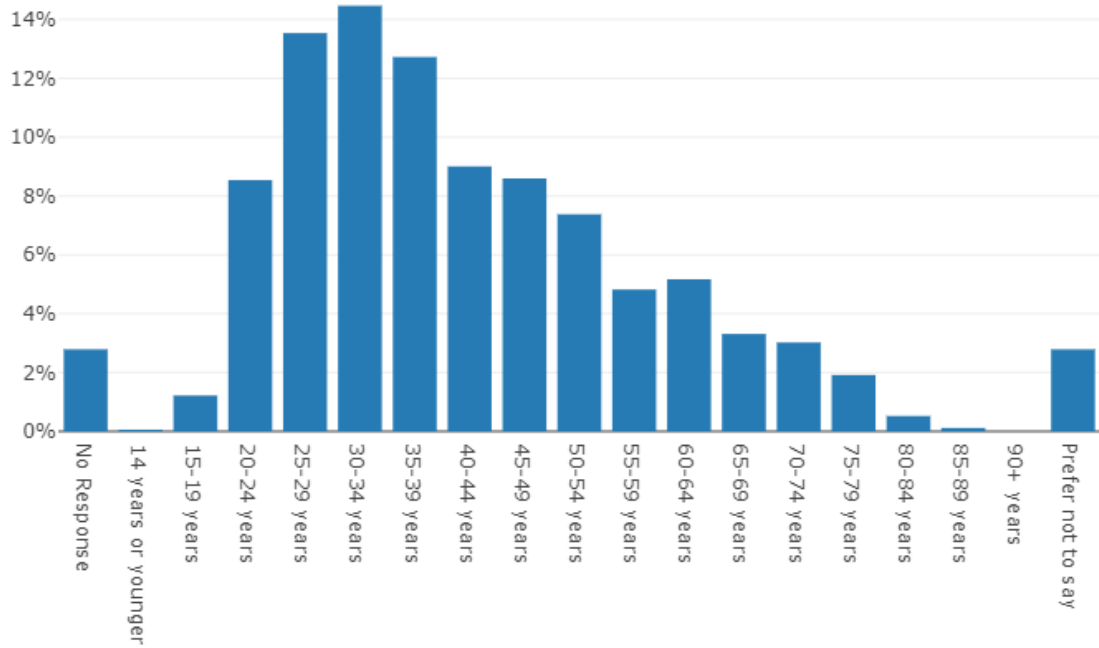
**Fig.2 Connection to CoM suburbs**

This data shows the distribution of survey respondents by location. The majority of responses came from the CBD (16.31%) and "Other" locations (14.28%), with Carlton (8.36%) and Kensington (10.68%) also contributing significant portions. Notably, 10.5% of respondents chose not to disclose their location. Areas like Docklands and Fisherman's Bend had much lower participation rates, at 3.37% and 0.17%, respectively. This suggests that engagement was higher in central and well-populated areas, while some outer neighbourhoods had less representation.



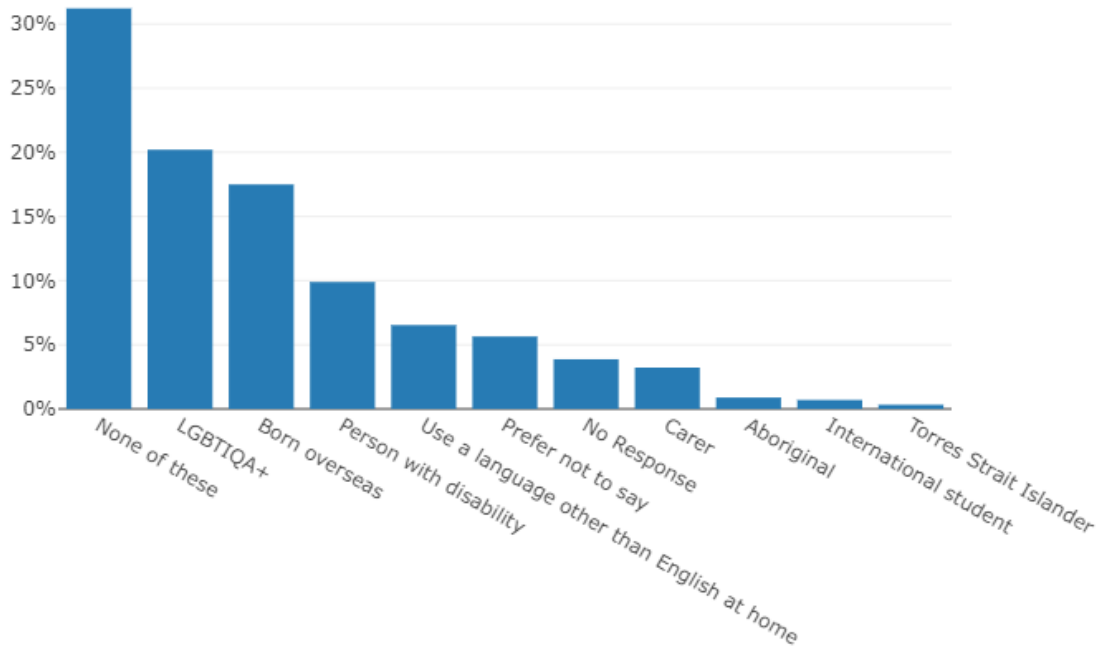
**Fig. 3 Gender**

Column chart showing the gender distribution from the survey. The majority of respondents identified as women (67.2%), followed by men (21.7%). A smaller percentage identified as non-binary (4.6%), while 5.8% preferred not to answer, and 0.6% identified as "Other." This distribution highlights a strong female participation in the survey.



**Fig. 4 Age**

This data shows the age distribution of survey respondents. The largest group falls between 25-34 years old, representing nearly 29% of total respondents. Participation decreases steadily with age, with fewer responses from those over 60. Very few respondents were under 15 or over 85. Notably, 2.87% chose not to disclose their age. This indicates that the survey reached a diverse age range but had stronger engagement from younger adults.



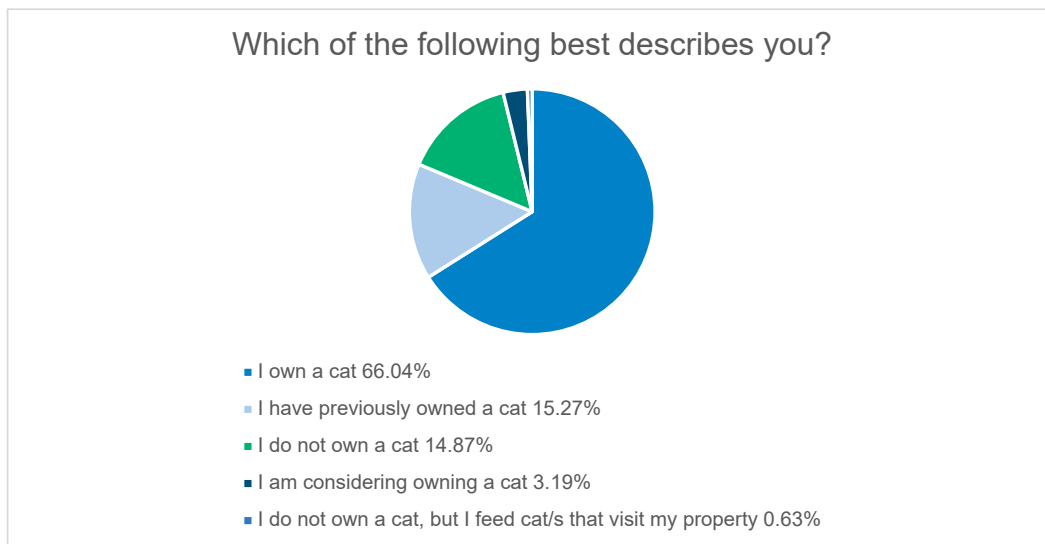
**Fig. 5 Identity**

This data outlines the diverse identities of survey respondents. A significant portion (40.97%) indicated that none of the listed categories applied to them. Notably, 26.5% of respondents identified as LGBTQIA, and 22.97% were born overseas, highlighting strong representation from these groups. People with disabilities (13.04%) and those speaking a language other than English at home (8.49%) also had notable participation. Smaller groups included carers (4.25%), Aboriginal (1.14%), Torres Strait Islander (0.42%), and international students (0.90%). Additionally, 7.24% of respondents preferred not to disclose this information.

## What we heard from the Community

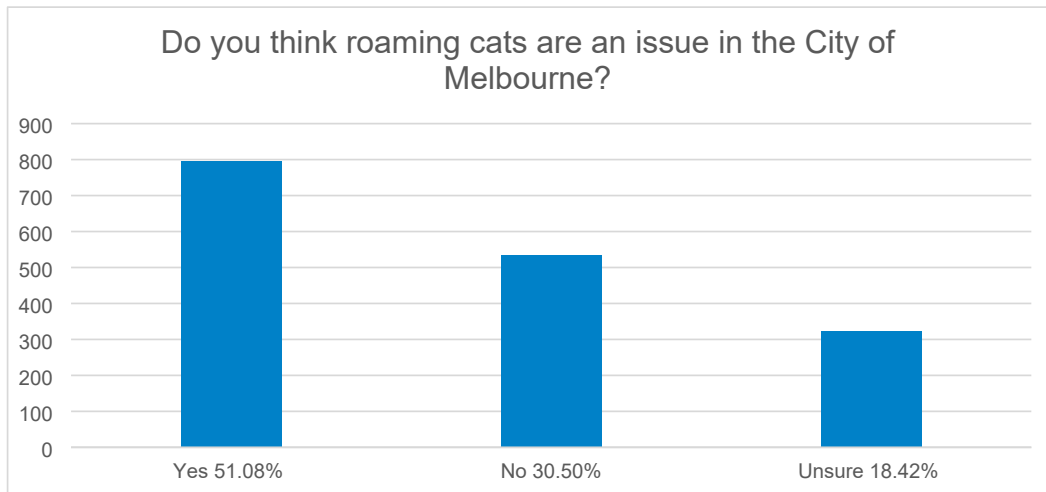
During the engagement we asked a variety of questions to find out how the community are currently affected by roaming cats and whether they support cat desexing and forms of cat containment.

There were 1758 survey responses and six written submissions.



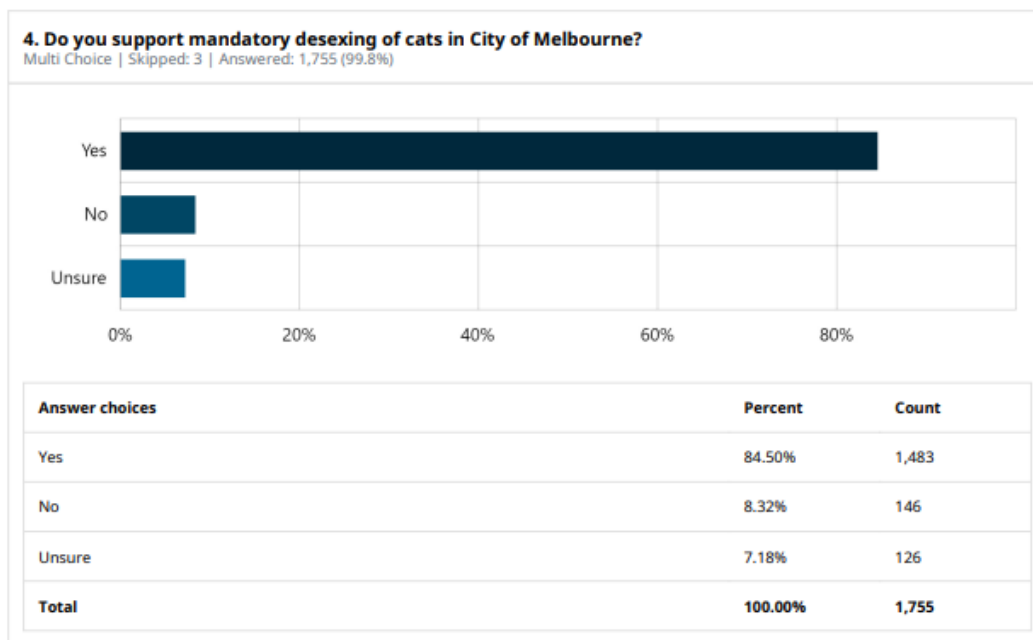
**Graph 1 - Pie chart showing ownership statistics of respondents**

The data illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their cat ownership status. The majority of respondents, (66%), indicated that they currently own a cat. (15.27%) of respondents have previously owned a cat, while (14.87%) do not own a cat at all. A smaller portion, (3.19%), are considering owning a cat in the future. Lastly, (0.63%) of respondents do not own a cat but feed cats that visit their property.



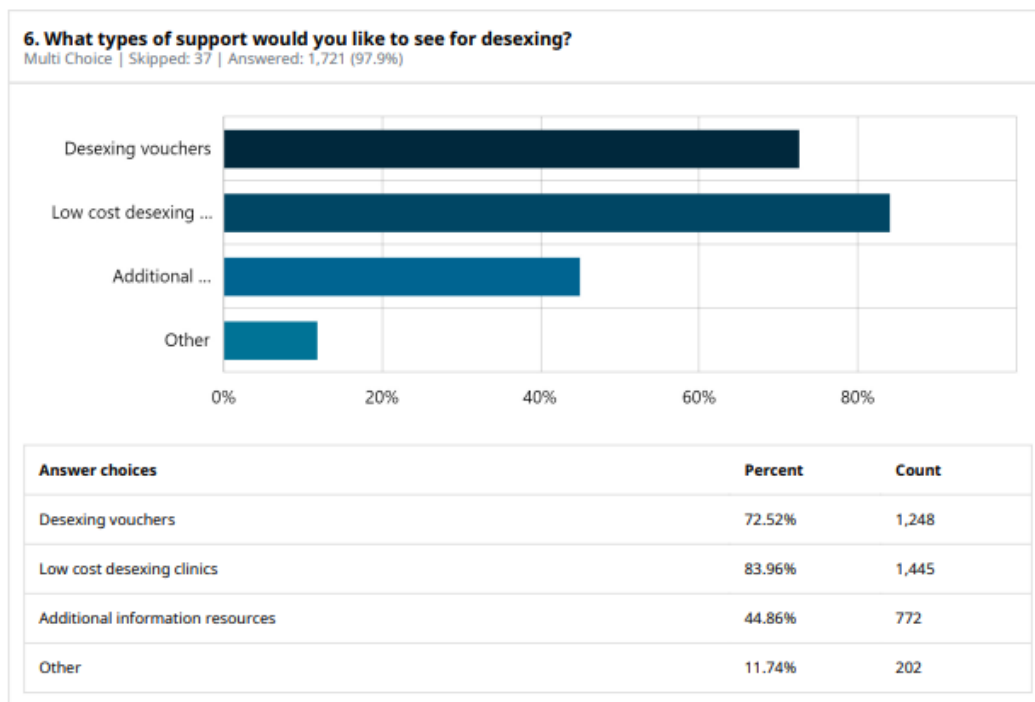
**Graph 2 - Graph showing perception of roaming cats as an issue in City of Melbourne**

The graph illustrates respondents' opinions on whether roaming cats are an issue in the City of Melbourne. A slight majority, (51.01%), believe that roaming cats are indeed an issue. (30.50%) of respondents do not think roaming cats are a problem, while (18.42%) are unsure about the matter.



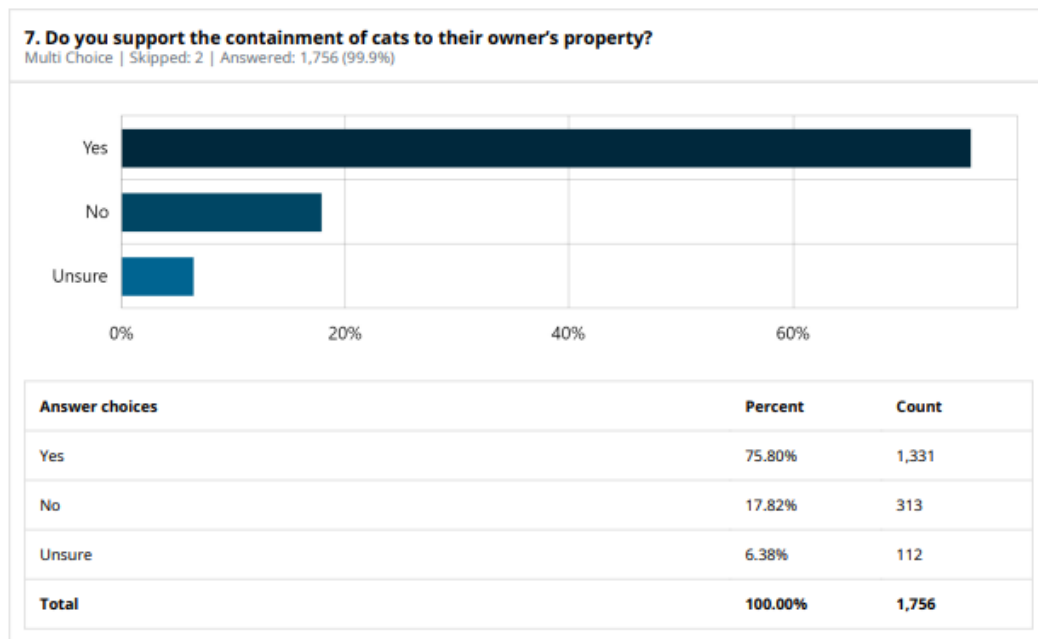
**Graph 3 - Bar graph outlining the Support for Mandatory Desexing of Cats in the City of Melbourne**

The graph illustrates respondents' support for mandatory desexing of cats in the City of Melbourne. Out of a total of 1,755 responses, a significant majority, 84.50% (1,483 responses), support mandatory desexing. 8.32% (146 responses) are against it, while 7.18% (126 responses) are unsure.



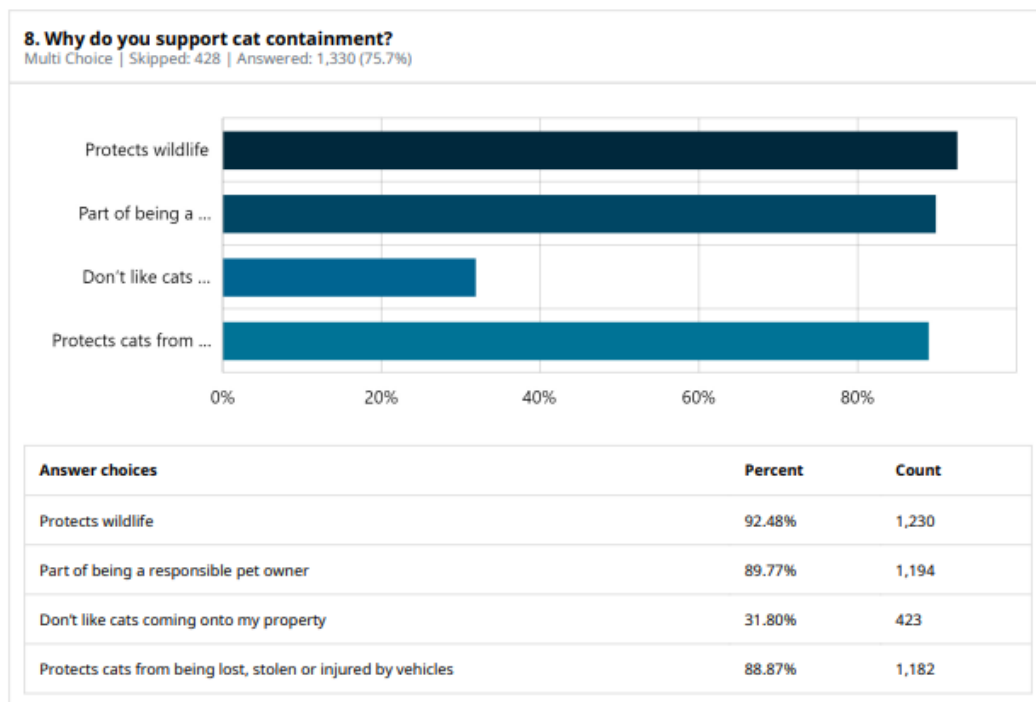
**Graph 4 - Bar graph outlining the preferred types of support for desexing**

The data illustrates the types of support respondents would like to see for desexing. Out of a total of 1,721 responses, 83.96% (1,445 responses) prefer low-cost desexing clinics. 72.52% (1,248 responses) prefer desexing vouchers. Additionally, 44.86% (772 responses) prefer additional information resources, while 11.74% (202 responses) prefer other types of support.



**Graph 5 - Bar graph outlining the support for containment of cats to their owner's property**

The data illustrates respondents' support for the containment of cats to their owners' property. Out of a total of 1,756 responses, 75.80% (1,331 responses) support the containment of cats. 17.82% (313 responses) are against it, while 6.38% (112 responses) are unsure.

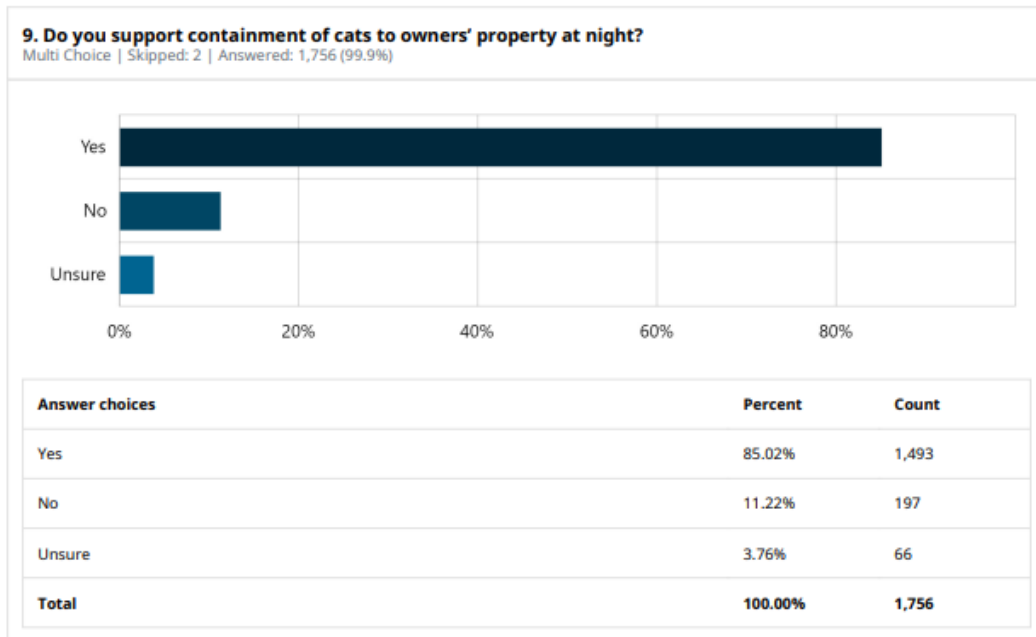


**Graph 6 - Respondents' reasons for supporting cat containment**

The data from the survey indicates the reasons why respondents support cat containment:

- **92.48%** of respondents (1,230 people) support containment to protect wildlife.
- **89.77%** of respondents (1,193 people) believe it is part of being a responsible pet owner.
- **88.87%** of respondents (1,183 people) support containment to protect cats from being lost, stolen, or injured by vehicles.
- **31.80%** of respondents (423 people) do not like cats coming onto their property.

This suggests that the primary motivations for supporting cat containment are to protect wildlife and to ensure the safety of cats. Around one third of respondents indicated that they support cat containment because they do not like cats trespassing on their property.

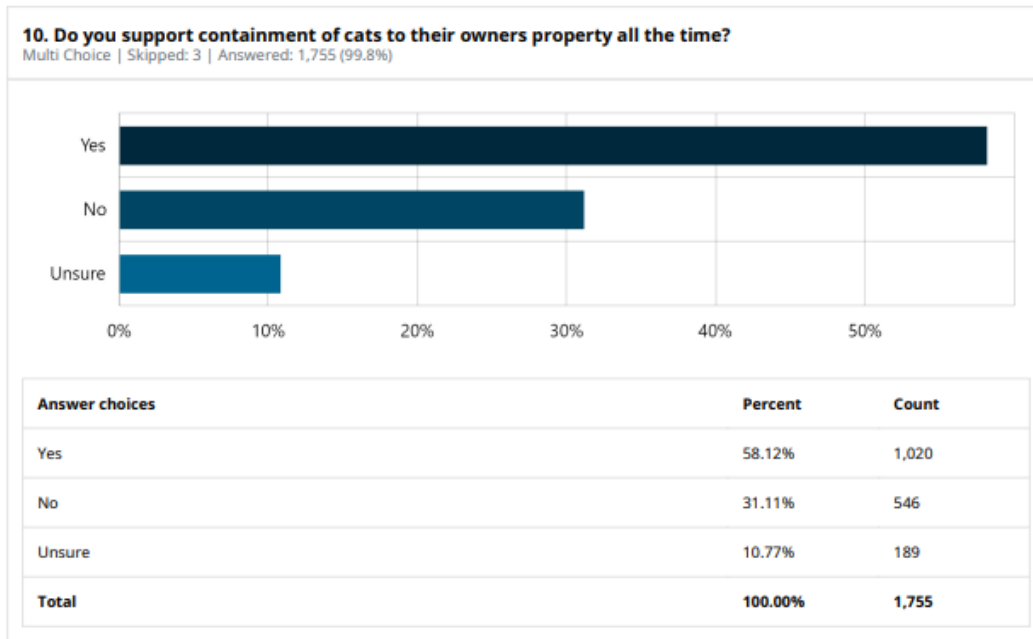


**Graph 7 - Community sentiment on cat curfew**

The data indicates the community's stance on containing cats to their owners' property at night (cat curfews):

- **85.02%** of respondents (1,493 people) support cat curfews.
- **11.22%** of respondents (197 people) do not support it.
- **3.76%** of respondents (66 people) are unsure.

This suggests that a significant majority of the community supports the idea of keeping cats contained to their owners' property at night.

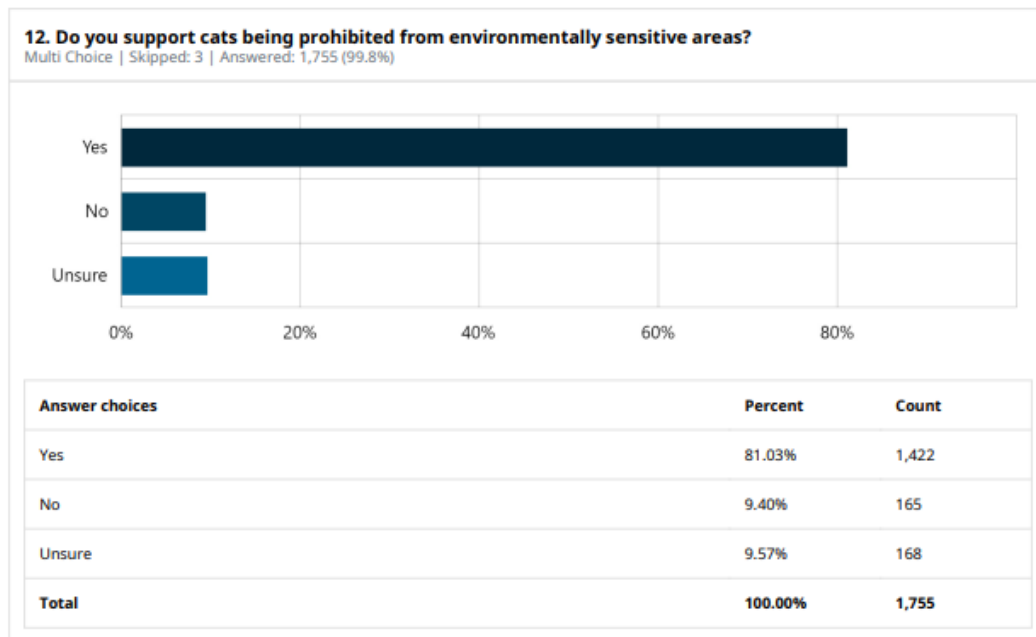


**Graph 8 - Community sentiment on cat containment**

The data from the survey indicates the community's stance on containing cats to their owners' property at all times:

- **58.12%** of respondents (1,020 people) support the containment.
- **31.11%** of respondents (546 people) do not support it.
- **10.77%** of respondents (189 people) are unsure.

This suggests that a majority of the community favours the idea of keeping cats contained to their owners' property, improving welfare outcomes for cats and reducing their impact the environment.



**Graph 9 – respondents’ opinion on prohibiting cats from environmentally sensitive areas in City of Melbourne**

The data indicates strong support for prohibiting cats from environmentally sensitive areas:

- **81.03%** of respondents (1,422 people) support the prohibition.
- **9.40%** of respondents (165 people) do not support it.
- **9.57%** of respondents (168 people) are unsure.

This suggests that a significant majority of the community is in favour of measures to protect environmentally sensitive areas from the impact of roaming cats.

## Engagement Findings

### What we heard from the community in support of mandatory desexing;

#### Population control

The community expressed their support of mandatory desexing being introduced as a measure to reduce the numbers of stray, unowned and feral cats within the municipality. A number of respondents told us that they believe trap and neuter programs are especially important in managing the stray cat population.

*"Cat desexing is the most important, effective, and humane thing to protect them and prevent strays suffering and causing trouble. If you love your cat, do it".*

#### Conservation of wildlife

Respondents told us that they think the mandatory desexing of cats will assist with the conservation of native wildlife. By reducing the stray cat population, we can protect wildlife from predation. Entire cats are more likely to hunt, impacting our native wildlife which is already impacted by urbanisation.

*"I value native wildlife above uncontained domestic cats and feel that cat owners need to be educated on both containment and desexing. Having rules in place is a terrific additional step".*

#### Reducing pressure on animal pounds, shelters and rescue groups

Respondents told us that they believe introducing mandatory desexing for cats will ease the strain that stray and unowned cats place on animal pounds, shelters and rescue groups.

*"Mandatory desexing will help lessen the number of animals coming into the care of rescues and shelters, and also stops backyard breeders from popping up".*

### What the community told us was concerning about mandatory desexing of cats;

#### Financial barriers and accessibility

Respondents expressed concerns around the affordability of desexing being a barrier to compliance for some cat owners. Some respondents said that if people can't afford to have their cat desexed to comply with the new policy, it may lead to less animals being registered with council and broader regulatory problems.

*"Mandatory desexing may discourage registration due to costs involved for both, as well as requirement to desex before registration".*

#### Efficacy of policy and barriers to enforcement

Respondents questioned how effective a mandatory desexing policy for cats would be and questioned the practicality of enforcing its requirements. The community expressed concern that people might resort to abandoning or surrendering their cats rather than complying with the legislation, which would in turn worsen the strain on pounds, shelters and rescues. People also questioned why it was necessary to make it mandatory to have your pet cat neutered with such a high percentage of registered cats were already desexed.

*"Population control should be important, but I can see why it would be unattainable to enforce. Desexing is expensive, who pays for it?"*

#### Owner autonomy

Some people expressed their belief that the decision to desex a pet should be left to the owner and not mandated by law. Some owners questioned what a mandatory desexing policy would mean for recreational breeders or pet owners who may want their cats to have a litter and can cater for this in a responsible way.

*"This may discriminate against legitimate cat breeders and would just discourage registration"*

### What we heard from the community in support of cat containment;

#### Protecting wildlife

There was strong support for having cat containment introduced as a measure to protect native wildlife. Many respondents raised concerns around the harm that free-roaming cats can cause to native wildlife populations and stated that they believed cat containment is an essential harm reduction measure.

*"I think it is very important that we do everything we can to support native wildlife in the area. Cat containment is essential to preventing the killing of wildlife"*

#### Welfare and safety of cats

Many respondents agreed that better welfare outcomes are achieved for cats when owners contain them on their property. Respondents expressed their belief that containing cats ensures they are protected from hazards such as vehicle traffic, predators and disease.

*"I think it is very important that we do everything we can to support native wildlife in the area. Cat containment is essential to preventing the killing of wildlife"*

#### Identification and management of unowned and stray cat population

Respondents have told us that they believe introducing cat containment will assist with identifying and managing stray and unowned cats within the municipality. Respondents expressed concern that allowing un-desexed cats to roam can lead to unwanted breeding and an increase in stray and unowned cats in the community.

*"Cat containment and compulsory desexing are essential for population control. I work with a rescue shelter and the number of unwanted kittens, trauma to cats, strays and dumped pets is only increasing".*

#### **What the community told us was concerning about cat containment;**

##### Challenges with compliance and enforcement

Respondents told us about the difficulties they may have with complying with an order mandating that cats are contained to the owner's property. They told us that containing cats, especially those not used to being kept indoors, can be challenging. They told us they were worried that the introduction of a cat containment policy may lead to an increase in animals being surrendered or abandoned, and a decline in compliance with registration requirements. Respondents also questioned the viability of council enforcing a cat containment order.

*"Most cat owners I know ignore cat curfews and the Council do not have the staff to enforce it"*

##### Impact on cat wellbeing

Respondents expressed that keeping cats confined to the owner's property at all times may negatively impact the animal's physical and mental health. They suggested that they did not see any reason for containing cats during daylight hours and expressed their belief that cats benefitted from being able to roam.

*"It's very difficult to keep cats from roaming especially during the summer. They don't want to be contained. We try to keep ours indoors but when it's hot they run so they won't be put indoors".*

##### Cost and practicality

Respondents who were unsupportive of cat containment cited the issues of cost and practicality as a barrier to compliance. Respondents advised that building cat enclosures or modifying properties to contain cats can be expensive, especially for those in rental properties. Cat owners expressed that it could be impractical to expect people to try and contain older cats that are accustomed to roaming.

*"I'm not sure about the practicalities of that for house owners. It's easy to contain cats in apartments, but in properties on ground level it might be hard and stressful for both humans and cats".*

#### **What we heard from key stakeholders;**

##### The Lost' Dogs Home

The Lost Dogs' Home (LDH) suggests that mandatory desexing and cat containment policies should be paired with other initiatives to change attitudes towards cat ownership and reduce the number of cats in shelters. They recommend the City of Melbourne (CoM) to:

1. Offer free desexing, microchipping, and registration to cat owners from low-income households and those needing financial support.

2. Offer free desexing, microchipping and registration to semi owners of cats if they agree to take full ownership.
3. Include an education program in any cat containment policy to emphasize cat welfare, including enrichment toys and human contact.
4. Provide free or discounted cat enclosures to low-income households, older residents, and people with disabilities.
5. Implement programs offering free desexing, microchipping

*“The Lost Dogs’ Home believes that the focus on mandatory desexing and cat containment in the consultation, should be considered in partnership with other policies and programs that help to change attitudes to cat ownership and reduce the number of cats and kittens coming to the shelters and pounds each year.”*

#### Australian Pet Welfare Foundation

The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF) opposes mandatory cat containment, stating that it will lead to increased cat-related complaints, impoundments, euthanasia, higher council costs, and enforcement difficulties for local governments. They argue that containment policies discourage semi-owners from taking full ownership of cats.

The APWF stated that the solution to reducing the problem of wandering cats and associated issues is high intensity free desexing programs targeting at areas of high impoundments and cat related complaints. The APWF expressed their full support for place-based cat desexing programs.

*“The expansion of local cat confinement laws will not solve the issue of semi-owned and stray domestic cats”.*

## **Outcome and next steps**

### **Outcome**

Council would like to thank everyone who took the time to provide their feedback on Cat Management.

Overall, the majority of responses indicated strong support for cat desexing and cat containment.

We heard a positive response from cat owners who encourage responsible pet ownership and have happy healthy desexed cats already contained to their properties.

We also heard some objections, suggestions and valid concerns around cat desexing and cat containment.

All consultation feedback has been reviewed and taken into consideration, with particular attention given to concerns raised amongst the community.

The outcome of this first phase of community engagement is to proceed with the development of a proposal for cat containment and cat desexing.

The draft proposal will be presented back to the Future Melbourne Committee on 1 April 2025, where submissions from the public can also be received.

If you have any feedback please respond to Animal Management, [animal.management@melbourne.vic.gov.au](mailto:animal.management@melbourne.vic.gov.au)

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