

Domestic Animal Orders including Frankston Dog Beach

Engagement Report





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Executive Summary



Consultation highlights

In May 2021 the community were engaged online and in person at a number of locations throughout the municipality. The community was asked to provide feedback on the 3 existing Council orders the questions asked were:

- Do you own a cat or dog
- Should cats be confined to their owners property at all times
- Should dogs be allowed off leash on beaches
- Should dogs be allowed in the Central Activities District of Frankston

From this survey 764 responses were received and highlighted the following:

- The majority of respondents wanted cats confined to their property (72.9%)
- 73.8% of respondents wanted a leash free dog beach
- 68.7% of respondents wanted to allow dogs in central Frankston

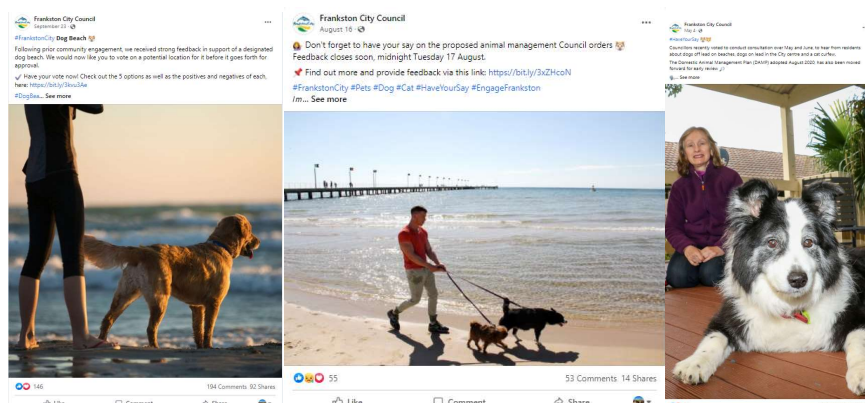
The community were informed of the outcomes of responses received and were formally invited to provide feedback on the proposed changes by written or verbal submission in July-August 2021.

Additional feedback was then sought online from the community (between 23 September 2021 and 11 October 2021) specifically in relation to dogs on beaches. The total amount of contributions for this consultation was 4,114. The community was provided with 5 options for a preferred location, these were: Olivers Hill, Seaford Beach, Keast Park, Gould Street and Armstrongs Road. The community was also asked if they wanted a time restricted dog beach or 24/7 dog beach.

- Olivers Hill was the clear favourite for the off lead dog beach
- 70% of respondents wanted an unrestricted dog beach that was accessible 24/7

Key engagement statistics

Feedback was sought via engage.frankston.vic.gov.au. This was heavily promoted through all Council media platforms including our website and social media. 764 responses were received in relation to the animals orders and a further 4,114 responses were received regarding the dog beach.



Introduction



Barriers to engagement

During community consultations, there are often limitations to the engagement overall and/or specific engagement activities. The limitations of this consultation have been identified as:

COVID-19

While the engagement conducted in May 2021 was both online and in-person, the further engagement in September-October 2021 was undertaken during lock downs or strong COVID 19 restrictions. This reduced our ability to actively engage with people face to face and as a result consultation had to occur online.

Time Restrictions

Council wanted to ensure that if the animal orders were to change, the project needed to be completed by early summer to make sure the community could enjoy the nicer weather with their pets. This requirement reduced the ability to undertake longer engagement periods or to have the ability to wait for COVID restrictions to ease to allow for face to face engagement.

Online Engagement

For the reasons outlined above, engagement was restricted to online in September-October 2021. To ensure the maximum audience reach, Council heavily promoted the consultation via all media platforms and contacted community groups and friends groups directly.

Introduction



Overview

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is a State Government requirement under the Domestic Animal Act 1994 and requires every Victorian Municipal Council to develop, implement and submit a DAMP to the Department of Agriculture every 4 years. As many issues had been raised in relation to animal management, Council brought forward the November 2021 review to May 2020.

In 2020, there were 733 responses to the community consultation made by members of the community by completing a survey online or by written submission directly to Council. Three actions were identified in the consultation, these were:

- Request for a 24/7 cat curfew
- Providing a free roam area on the foreshore
- Dogs being permitted on leads within the City Centre

This report provides a summary of the consultation undertaken to assist Council in determining the communities desire to amend these Council Orders. Whilst the Domestic Animals Act 1994 does not require community consultation to implement orders, it was in the community's best interest to have a say in these important changes.

Council's Engagement Principles:

This engagement was undertaken in accordance with Council's Engagement Principles. The Principles were applied to an 'involve' level of engagement, as per Council's level of engagement to be applied to this type of 'medium' community impact project.



Engagement Details



Purpose

The review of the Council animal orders and dog beach provides the community with an opportunity to give feedback to inform Council of the community's preferences, concerns or positive reassurances on the programs and policies the Council has established in accordance with the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and the management of domestic animal issues in the community.

Objectives

To understand the communities views on:

- Dogs being permitted off lead on foreshore areas
- Which beach would be best suited to having dogs off lead
- Allowing dogs in central Frankston
- Confining cats to their property 24 hours a day

Community consultation process

In 2020 community consultation was undertaken whilst reviewing the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). There were 733 responses to this community consultation made by members of the community completing a survey online or by written submission directly to Council.

As a result of this consultation three actions were identified that the community identified as significant issues and these were:

- Request for a 24/7 cat curfew
- Providing a free roam area on the foreshore
- Dogs being permitted on leads within the FMAC

In May 2021 the community was asked to provide feedback on the 3 existing Council orders, the questions asked were:

- Do you own a cat or dog
- Should cats be confined to their owners property at all times
- Should dogs be allowed off leach on beaches
- Should dogs be allowed in the Central Activities District of Frankston

Additional feedback was sought from the community (between 23 September 2021 and 11 October 2021) specifically in relation to dogs on beaches. The total amount of contributions for this consultation was 4,114 and the community was provided with 5 options for a preferred location.

Engagement Details

Council consultation process

As part of the consultation process the following internal Council teams were consulted and provided feedback.

- Environmental Policy & Planning
- Specialist Vegetation
- City Works
- Community Safety
- Community Relations
- Governance and Information

Community pop-ups

Members of Council's Community Safety team attended six public pop-ups across the municipality to consult the Frankston community on the existing Council Orders between 3 May 2021 and 30 May 2021. Council staff used iPads to directly record the community's responses to survey questions, and these contributed to the 764 survey responses received.

The locations and times of the pop-ups were strategically chosen to reach large numbers of residents and hard to reach groups.

To ensure an equal distribution of events throughout the three Frankston City Council wards, Council ran at least two pop-ups in each ward. The pop-up locations and times are displayed below.

Table 1

Pop-up locations	Date	Time
North-East Ward		
The Gateway Plaza	Saturday 15 May 2021	9:00am-11:00am
North-West Ward		
Karingal Hub	Saturday 15 May 2021	12:30pm-2:30pm
Seaford Auskick	Saturday 8 May 2021	9:00am-11:00am
South Ward		
Excelsior Drive	Wednesday 19 May 2021	11:30am-1:30pm
Frankston Market	Sunday 23 May 2021	8:00am-12:00pm
Wells St	Thursday 6 May 2021	10:00am-3:00pm

Engagement Details

Online

Council also consulted with the community in relation to the existing Council Orders between 3 May 2021 and 30 May 2021 through an on line survey. A total number of 764 responses were received.

An invitation for further formal submissions was offered via Council's 'Have your say' webpage and promoted via social media and Council's website from Tuesday 20 July to 17 August 2021.

Additional feedback was sought online from the community (between 23 September 2021 and 11 October 2021) specifically in relation to dogs on beaches. The total amount of contributions for this consultation was 4,114 and the community was provided with 5 options for a preferred location.

Council's *Engage Frankston!* platform was used for the September-October 2021 engagement, and enabled Council to provide a user-friendly and visually appealing platform to encourage participation by a diverse range of community members. Community members were informed with images and pros/cons to enable them to make an informed decision as to which dog beach location to vote for.

Social Media

Social media was used as a promotional platform to direct people to the Engage Frankston website to provide feedback on both the animal orders and dog beach location. Targeted and sponsored advertisements were used to focus on Frankston residents.

Formal submissions

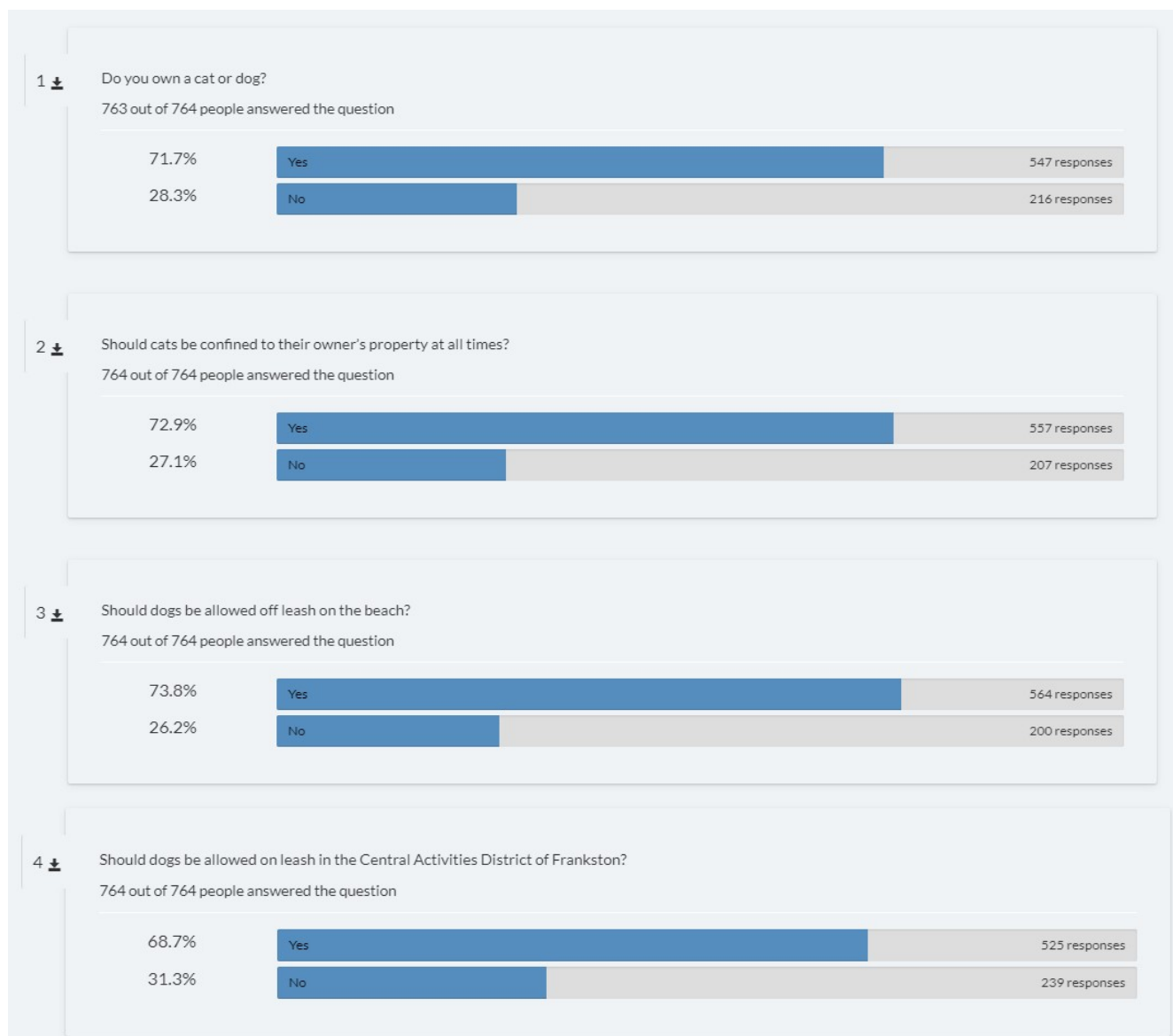
Further to the May 2021 engagement, the community was offered the opportunity to provide feedback to the proposed changes, in writing to info@frankston.vic.gov.au or in person at the Council Meeting on 16 August 2021, (they could register to speak at the meeting by contacting 1300-322-322). Written submissions were then presented to Council at its public meeting on 20 September 2021.

Consultation outcomes



Community feedback

In May 2021 the community was asked to provide feedback on the 3 existing Council orders and the results were:





Respondents had an opportunity to provide written submissions in addition to the above survey. The community was informed as follows about the proposed changes, and how they could provide feedback via submission:

- The following table outlines the current Council Orders and the Proposed Changes to these orders.
- Initial feedback received from the community to date indicates that these proposed changes are supported.
- The public is now formally invited to provide feedback on these proposed changes. If Council resolves to make these orders, they will be published in the Government Gazette and in a newspaper circulating in the municipal district:

Table 2

Council Order	Current Order	Proposed Changes
Cat Curfew	The owner of a cat must not allow that cat to wander at large outside the owner's property between sunset and sunrise.	This order will be amended to require cat owners to confine their cats on their premises 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Roam free area on foreshore	Dogs are not permitted on the foreshore between 9.30am and 7.30pm between 1 December and 31 March. Dogs are permitted at other times, provided they are under effective control of a chain, cord or leash.	This order will be amended to allow for a section of the foreshore to be designated as a roam free area for dogs.
Dogs in Frankston CAA	Dogs are prohibited from the CAA area of Frankston (City Centre)	This order will be removed. Dogs will be allowed in the CAA and will be subject to current laws regarding dogs (must be on a leash, must pick up after it, and must be registered).

Key themes from submissions were presented to Council at its public meeting on 20 September, and showed:

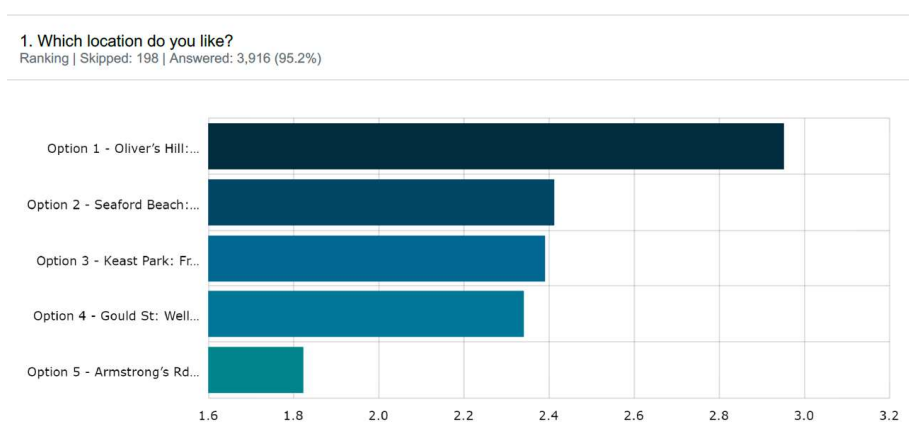
- There was a near 50/50 split both for and against a 24/7 cat curfew.
- The majority wanted to allow dogs in central Frankston.
- An overwhelming amount of the community wanted an area of the foreshore where dogs could be exercised off lead.



Table 3:

	For the 24/7 Cat Curfew	Against 24/7 Cat Curfew	For designated free roam area on the foreshore	Against designated free roam area on foreshore	For Dogs in CAA	Against Dogs in CAA
Number of 'votes' from submitters	94	102	117	27	72	26
Key Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect local and native wildlife This is in line with other Councils Keep cats safe from traffic Stops cats fighting with other cats and dogs Stops cats defecating and damaging other properties Stops dogs barking at cats and causing noise and nuisance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhumane and cruel on cats Expensive to install a cat run and pay for additional kitty litter Unfair on residents who are renting and are unable to build cat runs Current curfew works well (dusk to dawn) Unrealistic and may cause an increase of abandonments of cats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes healthy and active lifestyles Improves mental health, encourages people to interact Great for dogs to stay active and cool down Attracts tourism to the beach and municipality Residents can stay local rather than travelling to other beaches outside municipality More bins and dog bags Suggested locations: Oliver's Hill beach, Seaford Beach, Keast Park Be aware of beaches that are heavily used by families and beaches that are used by residents with accessibility needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollution in water Dog waste in sand Unsafe Should be fully fenced Needs to be patrolled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great to support local businesses Compliment outdoor dining Improve dog culture and families in the CAA Bring additional businesses and people into the CAA Encourage fitness and health and active lifestyles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsafe, trip hazards Dog waste Not enough bins or dog waste bags Too noisy and stressful Dogs can be intimidating

Additional feedback was sought from the community (between 23 September 2021 and 11 October 2021) specifically in relation to dogs on beaches. The total amount of contributions for this consultation was 4,114. The community was provided with 5 options for a preferred location and the results are highlighted below.

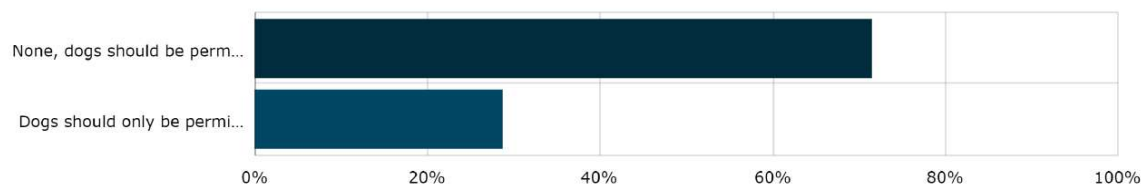




The community was also asked “what time restrictions should apply to your preferred location”, and the results are highlighted below

2. What time restrictions should apply to your preferred location?

Select Box | Skipped: 284 | Answered: 3,830 (93.1%)



Key learnings

While over 4000 responses were received in response to which locality was preferred for a dog beach, the final decision made by Councillors was to select the community’s third preference for a location.

Some respondents identified that future animal-related consultation should be broader and animal owners should be advised of consultation opportunities through rates notices or animal registrations.

Council acknowledges that in normal circumstances there would have been more face to face consultation undertaken, however with COVID restrictions this was not possible. Additionally rates notices and animal registrations are issued at certain times of the year and with set timeframes it was not possible to wait for these notices to be issued in order to undertake the consultation. However this feedback is noted for future community consultation.

The Engagement Plan for this consultation included several measures of success related to the engagement objectives.

The success measures and the objective they relate to are outlined below:

Objective	Success Measure
To maximise opportunities for all affected and interested community members to provide feedback in relation to animal management related orders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly 5,000 responses were received across the community consultation. In 2020, 733 responses were received for the review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan, so in comparison the 2021 consultation for the animal orders is considered to be highly successful and the community gave a clear view to Council on what they expect and want.
To seek the communities guidance on the preferred location of a dog beach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We asked if our community wanted a dedicated dog beach in the Frankston municipality and over 73 per cent of respondents said 'yes'. We also received over 4000 responses to the question of which locality was preferred for a dog beach. Councillors voted at the 15 November Council Meeting in favour of Keast Park, as the safest place for a dog beach with 200 metres of sand for them to run and play. This was, the community's third preferred location for a dog beach.



The Outcome

Dog Beach:

We asked if our community wanted a dedicated dog beach in the Frankston municipality and over 73 per cent of respondents said 'yes'. Following much deliberation, Councillors voted at the 15 November Council Meeting in favour of Keast Park, as the safest place for a dog beach with 200 metres of sand for them to run and play.

Keast Park is much less populated than Olivers Hill with direct parking and access via a fenced walkway. Councillors felt it was important to protect the amenity of Olivers Hill and ensure it remains a safe destination primarily for people, water sports and boats.

New dog waste bins and bag dispensers will be installed at the Keast Park dog beach as part of the initiative. Dogs will be allowed to freely roam (24/7) within the allocated markers at Keast Park foreshore from Emergency Marker FCC114 to the water outlet. The area will be clearly signposted with information on any restrictions.

Dogs in the City Centre:

Councillors voted to introduce an animal order allowing people to take their dogs into the Frankston City Centre, specifically in the area bounded by Davey Street, Kananook Creek and Fletcher Road. Dogs must be on a leash and owners must pick up after their pet

Cat Curfew:

A majority of Councillors voted against a 24 hour car curfew, citing concerns including the need for cats to have access to fresh air and the outdoors. All cat owners are required to secure their cat indoors between dusk and dawn to avoid predatory behaviour.

Next steps

The two new animal management orders are scheduled to come into effect from the end of December 2021. Further information on the new rules will be provided to the community.

Appendices



15 November 2021 Council Report –
12.18 Animal Orders and Regulations
*(noting official order was made at the
meeting held 6 December 2021)*

<https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Your-Council/Council-and-Committee-Meetings/Council-Agendas-and-Minutes-2021>

Domestic Animal Management Plan

<https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Our-Community/Animals/Animal-Management>