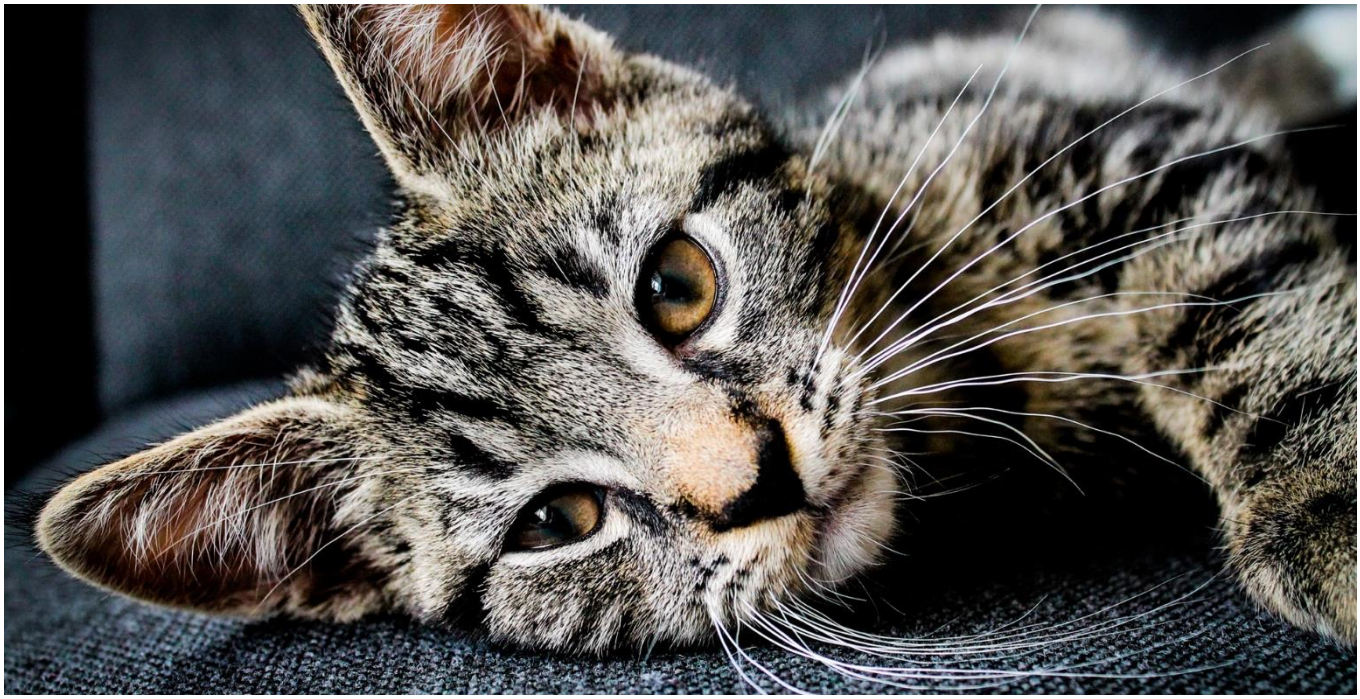
Proposed Cats By-law



Have your say on the proposed Cats By-law

Council regularly hears from residents concerned about roaming cats, nuisance behaviour, impacts on native wildlife and responsible cat ownership.

In 2024, council asked the community about cat management. Of the 1,396 people who responded, 58% supported introducing a local Cats by-law.

Council has also advocated for a consistent statewide approach to cat management for several years. While the South Australian Government is developing a Cat Management Strategy, the timing of any new arrangements remains uncertain.

Council is now considering whether a local Cats by-law could help address some of these concerns.

No final decision has been made about whether a Cats By-law will be introduced.

At its meeting on 13 October 2026, Council resolved to undertake public consultation on the proposed Cats by-law.

Council will consider the community's feedback and other relevant information before making a final decision about whether to introduce the by-law, amend it or pursue a different approach.

This engagement builds on the feedback we received from the community in 2024, and targeted early engagement undertaken with organisations and stakeholders with relevant knowledge, experience or interests.

We want to understand what you think about the proposed by-law, how it may affect you and whether there are practical issues, unintended impacts or other matters Council should consider before making a final decision.

Background

Cat management has been an ongoing area of community and council interest.

In 2024, we undertook city-wide engagement to better understand community views about the management of owned cats. We heard from **1,396 survey respondents**, including cat owners and non-cat owners.

That engagement explored:

- containment and curfews for owned cats
- limits on the number of cats
- registration fees
- regulation compared with education.

The findings showed strong community interest in cat management, but also different views about the best approach.

When respondents were asked about council's role:

- **73 per cent** supported continued education about responsible cat ownership
- **64 per cent** supported continued advocacy for a statewide approach
- **58 per cent** supported introducing a Cats By-law.

Participants also raised practical issues including enforcement, animal welfare, affordability, shelter capacity, exemptions for foster and rescue carers and the cost of administering additional cat controls.

Council considered these findings in December 2024 and continued to focus on education and advocacy for a statewide approach.

In January 2025, the Department for Environment and Water advised council that a statewide cat management strategy for South Australia was being developed, with public engagement originally intended for mid-2025.

Council remains of the view that legislative reform should be informed by a statewide strategy and supported by evidence of effectiveness, transparent consideration of regulatory impacts and management of unintended consequences.

However, considering the time that has elapsed, council is now considering a local Cats By-law for the management and control of cats within the City of Onkaparinga.

We are building on what you already told us

The feedback received in 2024 remains an important part of this work.

We are not asking the community to start the conversation again.

Instead, this engagement focuses on the specific rules now proposed in the draft Cats By-law.

Feedback from the 2024 engagement, targeted early stakeholder engagement and this broader community engagement will all help inform the report presented to Council before it makes a final decision.

What is being proposed?

The proposed Cats By-law could introduce additional local requirements for the management of cats within the City of Onkaparinga.

The proposed provisions cover:

- a limit of two cats over three months of age on any premises, unless permission or an exemption applies.
- effective confinement of cats at all times, with transitional arrangements for existing cats.
- additional provisions to address nuisance caused by cats.

The proposed by-law also includes provisions for exemptions and enforcement and allows for Council to introduce a registration fee at a future date.

These requirements would operate alongside existing requirements under South Australian legislation.

At a glance

Proposed provision	What it could mean
Limit of two cats	A person could generally keep no more than two cats over three months old on a property unless permission or an exemption applies.
Existing households with more than two cats	People already keeping more than two cats when the By-law commences could continue to keep those cats without seeking permission if they notify council within three months and meet the conditions in the By-law and in accordance with the Dog and Cat Management Act.
Permission for additional cats	People could apply to council for permission to keep more than two cats.
Cats not to cause nuisance	Cats could not cause specified nuisance to other people, animals or property.
Effective confinement	Council could require cats to remain confined to their owner's property at all times unless under effective control.
Existing cats and confinement	Cats born before 1 January 2028 could be exempt from future confinement requirements if they meet the registration and evidence requirements in the By-law.
Registration fee	The By-law would allow Council to prescribe a registration fee. The By-law itself does not set the amount.
Exemptions	Council could grant exemptions from specified requirements for individuals or classes of people.
Enforcement	Authorised officers could issue orders requiring someone to stop or remedy a breach of the By-law.

Frequently asked questions

LIMIT ON CAT NUMBERS

The draft By-law proposes that a person must not keep more than two cats over three months old on any premises without council permission.

What if I already have more than two cats?

The proposed By-law does include transitional arrangements for existing multi-cat households.

These arrangements would be subject to conditions, including registration, desexing, avoiding nuisance and not acquiring additional cats.

Community feedback will help council understand whether these arrangements are reasonable and practical.

Could I apply to keep more than two cats?

Yes.

The proposed By-law allows council to give permission to keep more than two cats. These arrangements would be subject to conditions, including registration, desexing, avoiding nuisance and not acquiring additional cats.

CATS CAUSING NUISANCE

The proposed By-law would make it an offence for a cat to cause specified nuisance.

This could include a cat:

- creating noise or odour that unreasonably interferes with another person's peace, comfort or convenience
- defecating or urinating on someone else's land without permission
- wandering onto someone else's land without permission
- injuring or harassing another person's animal
- damaging or adversely affecting another person's property.

If a cat causes a nuisance, the owner or person responsible for the cat may be in breach of the by-law and could be subject to compliance or enforcement action. Council's approach would typically be to work with owners to address issues and encourage compliance in the first instance.

EFFECTIVE CONFINEMENT OF CATS

The draft By-law would give Council the ability to introduce **effective confinement of cats at all times**.

If activated, owners or people responsible for cats would generally need to ensure their cat remained within the property where they live unless the cat was under effective control.

Would confinement start immediately?

No.

The proposed By-law does not automatically introduce 24-hour confinement when it commences.

Council would need to make a separate decision to activate this requirement to allow time for implementation planning, education and for cat owners to prepare.

Would I have to keep my cat indoors all the time?

Not necessarily.

The proposed By-law would require cats to be effectively confined to your premises, which could include keeping them inside the home, in an enclosed outdoor area or under suitable physical restraint, such as a leash.

Council is seeking feedback on how practical these requirements would be for cat owners.

Would the new containment rules apply to my existing cat(s)?

The proposed By-law confinement requirement would apply to cats born after 1 January 2028. Cats born before that date would be exempt from the containment provisions, provided they meet specified registration conditions.

However, it does create an offence should your existing cat wander onto private property. Refer cats causing nuisance.

REGISTRATION OF CATS

The proposed By-law would require cats over three months old that are kept within the City of Onkaparinga for more than 14 days to be registered in accordance with the By-law from **1 July 2027**.

Registration would:

- be in the name of a person aged 16 years or older
- identify the property where the cat is kept
- include information required by council
- be renewed annually
- include a registration fee if Council decides to prescribe one.

Existing South Australian mandatory requirements relating to cats, including Dogs and Cats Online, microchipping and desexing, would continue to apply.

My cat is already registered, microchipped and recorded on Dogs and Cats Online. Why would I need to register it again?

South Australian legislation already requires cats to be microchipped, and their details recorded on Dogs and Cats Online (DACO). This helps officers identify cats and their owners, returning lost or stray cats when identified.

The proposed By-law would allow the introduction of a registration fee, should council choose to apply one.

While the proposed Cats By-law does not set a registration fee, the application of a fee could support compliance and recover some of the costs associated with cat management.

ENFORCEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS

Exemptions

The proposed By-law would allow council to exempt an individual or a class of people from a specified requirement.

An exemption could:

- be temporary or ongoing
- include conditions
- be varied or revoked where appropriate.

We are interested in hearing whether there are circumstances Council should consider when developing its approach to exemptions.

Enforcement

If someone breaches the By-law, an authorised council officer could issue an order requiring them to:

- stop the behaviour causing the breach
- take specified action to remedy the breach.

For example, an order could require someone to stop keeping more than the permitted number of cats or, where a confinement requirement applies, take action to keep a cat confined.

Detailed education, compliance and enforcement arrangements would be developed before new requirements commence.

How would council enforce the By-law?

Enforcement would depend on the nature of the complaint, the available evidence, council's powers under the relevant legislation and the resources available to investigate and respond.

For example, council may need to identify the owner of a roaming cat or establish that a particular requirement has been breached.

These investigations can be difficult, time-consuming and resource intensive.

While a By-law would provide additional regulatory tools, enforcement outcomes would ultimately depend on the level of resources available. It would not mean council could prevent every cat from roaming or investigate every reported incident.

Where evidence is available to identify an offence and the cat owner, enforcement action will be taken consistent with our enforcement policy and may include education, warnings or enforcement arrangements.

Will introducing the By-law stop cats from roaming and causing problems?

No. The proposed By-law could encourage responsible cat ownership and provide council with additional powers to address certain cat-related issues.

However, enforcing these requirements may be difficult, particularly where a cat's owner cannot be identified or there is insufficient evidence of a breach.

In addition, the provisions of the proposed by-law would have no application to feral and unowned cats.

It will help address some problems associated with roaming owned cats, but it would not resolve every cat-related issue.

Will a Cats By-law address feral, stray or unowned cat populations?

No.

A Cats By-law will only address owned cats.

The state government is responsible for the management and control of feral, stray or unowned cat populations.

Who can I contact for more information?

For general questions, you can contact council on:

Gill Birch: 8384 0666

Email: mail@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au