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# Companion Animal Management Plan

Record No: 19/8276

Adopted: TBD



<b>Policy Type</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Policy Reference Number</b>	CPOL - Companion Animal Management Plan
<b>Link to Community Strategic Plan</b>	5.3 Ensure good governance and administration
<b>Adopted by Council</b>	TBD
<b>Council Resolution No</b>	Version 2 – 35/19FC
<b>Version Number</b>	3
<b>Responsible Directorate</b>	Planning, Place & Sustainability
<b>Review schedule</b>	Every 4 years
<b>Next Review Date</b>	December 2028

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# 1. Purpose

In NSW, local governments have enforcement functions under the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (the Act) and *Companion Animals Regulation 2018* (the Regulation).

The purpose of this Plan is to identify how Council will fulfil its responsibilities under the Act over the next four (4) years, by determining relevant objectives, priorities and clear action plans that describe how these will be achieved.

The objectives of this Plan are to:

- Improve registration and identification of cats and dogs;
- Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership;
- Protect public safety, the environment and amenity;
- Implement effective compliance, enforcement, and animal management strategies; and
- Provide facilities in public spaces that support responsible pet ownership.

# 2. Scope

This Plan applies to Council and all owners and persons in control of a companion animal as defined under the Act, which are located within the Federation local government area (LGA) or use facilities located within Federation local government area.

# 3. Definitions

Refer to the Act and the Regulation for definitions pertaining to this Policy.

# 4. Responsibilities

The Director Planning, Place & Sustainability is responsible for the implementation of this Plan. Council authorised officers under the Act are responsible for discharging Council's obligations under the Act.

# 5. Background

## Pet Ownership

Companion animals play an important part of our society. According to findings of the *Pets in Australia: A National Survey of Pets and People* research undertaken by Animal Medicines Australia in 2022, there are an estimated 28.7 million pets in Australia, with one of the highest pet ownership rates in the world. Approximately 69% of households in Australia own pets, with dogs being the most common (48%), followed by cats (33%). Eighty-five percent (85%) of owners say their pets have positively impacted their lives. Common benefits of pet ownership described by pet owners include:

- Relational benefits (love, affection, and companionship);
- Improvement of mental health and wellbeing;
- Socialisation benefits (e.g., connection to the community and opportunities for human interaction in person or online); and
- Improvement of physical health.

In Federation LGA, there are 5,159 dogs and 889 cats registered. This equates to approximately 46% of the population in Federation LGA having a dog or cat. There are a further 135 dogs and 38 cats that are microchipped but not registered that require following up (at the time of writing this Plan).

In 2023-24, Council authorised officers:

- issued 41 infringement notices for offences under the Act;
- issued 7 Nuisance Dog declarations;
- issued 4 Menacing Dog declarations; and
- issued 0 Dangerous Dog declarations.

There are currently no dangerous dogs registered in the Federation LGA (at the time of writing this Plan).

## Legislative Context

In NSW, companion animals are primarily regulated under the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (the Act) and *Companion Animals Regulation 2018* (the Regulation). The objective of the Act is to provide for effective and responsible care and management of companion animals.

*Note: companion animals under the Act includes dog and cat (or any other animal prescribed by the regulations as a companion animal – of which there are no other animals prescribed).*

Councils have powers and authority under the Act and Regulations with regards to enforcement of offences. Under section 6A of the Act, states that council is required to:

- Promote awareness within its area of the requirements of this Act with respect to ownership of companion animals; and
- Take such steps as are appropriate to ensure that it is notified or otherwise made aware of the existence of all dangerous, menacing, and restricted dogs (including dogs that might reasonably be considered to be the subject of a declaration under Division 1 or 6 of Part 5) that are ordinarily kept within its area.

The Office of Local Government (OLG) developed the “*Guideline on the Exercise of Functions Under the Companion Animals Act*” to assist councils in exercising their functions under the Act.

Councils also have functions in relation to companion animals under other legislation. For example, under the *Local Government Act 1993*, councils can issue an Order to an occupier of a premises if the type and number of animals or birds kept on the premises is of an inappropriate kind or quantity.

## Links to Council’s Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) Framework

Under the Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) Framework, Council sets long term vision for its community through the 10-year Community Strategy Plan and outlines how it hopes to achieve this vision through short term goals outlined in the 4-year Delivery Program and 1-year Operational Plan.

Under these guiding documents, companion animal management is a mandatory service under “Natural Federation” with a goal of ‘sustainable landscapes, waterways and open space to support various lifestyle choices, protect the natural environment and adapt to changing climate’.

Performance Measures for companion animal management include:

Key Performance Indicator	Measure	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of lost animals reunited with owners	#	20	20	20	20
Number of notices, orders and fines issued	#	20	20	20	20

Under the IP&R Framework, Council is required to provide an Annual Report. Section 217(1)(f) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 requires Council to report on companion animal management duties undertaken in the Annual Report.

During the 2023-24 period, the following activities were undertaken:

Activity	Number / Details
Animals seized and taken to the pound	25 (1 cat, 24 dogs)
Animals returned to their owner	21 (1 cat, 20 dogs)
Dogs transferred to another re-homing agency	4
Dog attacks reported to the Office of Local Government (OLG)	6
Community education programs and strategies	2 free microchipping events in Oaklands & Urana 1 Pet Day Out in Corowa

## Council's Companion Animal Management Service

### 5.4.1 Public Safety

A safe community is a high priority for this Plan. Dog attacks primarily occur where dogs are not under effective control in a public place. Dog attacks are more common where a dominant protective, un-socialised dog is not adequately controlled. Pet owners must ensure they can control their dog in public and is well socialised to prevent aggressive behaviour.

Under section 13 (1) of the Act a dog that is in a public place must be under the effective control of a competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash that is attached to the dog and that is being held by (or secured to) the person.

According to RSPCA, 'socialising' is getting your new puppy used to people and other dogs as well as making sure that they have lots of different and positive experiences that will help them grow into happy and confident adult dogs.

Council has a zero tolerance to aggressive dogs or dogs that attack another animal or person. Where a dog attack is substantiated, Council will take strong enforcement action to protect public safety. There are severe penalties for dog owners that attack.

Other measures Council will take includes:

- Encourage and promote responsible pet ownership;
- Provide public spaces that support pet owners to safely exercise and socialise their pets; and
- Undertake regular patrols in public spaces to monitor compliance with leash requirements.

## 5.4.2 Responsible Pet Ownership Education

Promotion of responsible pet ownership is a key focus of this Plan. Council aims to encourage all pet owners to be responsible for their pets' actions through balancing enforcement and education.

Responsible pet ownership includes (but is not limited to):

- Microchipping and registration
- Wearing identification tags
- Socialisation of the pet
- Training
- Exercise
- Basic health and welfare
- Desexing
- Secure confinement
- Environmental and social enrichment
- Consideration of neighbours and other members of the community
- Commitment to the lifetime of the animal
- Careful pet selection

Pet owners should ensure the following:

- Ensure that their pet(s) do not have an adverse impact such that they unreasonably interfere with the peace, comfort, or convenience of any person in any other premise.
- Ensure companion pet(s) are secured in their own property and prevent them roaming at night.
- When in a public place have their dog(s) under effective control.
- Keep their pet(s) out of prohibited areas.
- Have their pet identified with a micro-chip, and a collar and tag – to assist in identification and returning if the pet is lost and captured.
- Have the pet registered on the NSW State register.
- Have the pet(s) desexed. This will assist with reducing nuisance behaviour and the number of unwanted animals, as well as contributing to a healthier and happier pet.
- Clean up after their pet(s).

Council promotes responsible pet ownership in several ways, including:

- Providing information on its corporate website;
- Publishing posts on its corporate social media pages;
- Responding to customer enquiries related to pet ownership;
- Referring pet owners to reliable sources of information about responsible pet ownership;
- Staff engaging with members of the public when exercising their duties under the Act; and
- Hosting community education days/events, such as free microchipping events.

Council will continually look for ways to improve and promote responsible pet ownership in its community.

## 5.4.3 Nuisance, Menacing, Dangerous & Restricted Dogs

There are several enforcement options under the Act that Council can take in relation to nuisance, menacing, dangerous and restricted dogs.

### 5.4.3.1 Nuisance Dogs

Section 32A of the Act defines a dog as being a nuisance if it:

- is habitually at large;
- makes a noise by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort, or convenience of any person in any other premise; repeatedly defecates on another person's property;
- repeatedly chases any person, animal, or vehicle;
- endangers the health of any person or animal; or,
- repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

The words 'repeatedly' and 'habitually' are important in determining if a nuisance exists. Where nuisance behaviour is identified Council may take-action under the Act via the issuing of Orders to declare a dog as a nuisance dog.

A nuisance dog Order requires the owner of the dog to prevent the behaviour that is alleged to constitute the nuisance. Such an Order remains in force for six (6) months from the date it was issued. Failure to comply with the Order is an offence under the Act and is subject to penalties or prosecution.

#### **5.4.3.2 Menacing Dogs**

Section 33A of the Act defines a dog as being menacing if it:

- has displayed unreasonable aggression towards a person or animal (other than vermin), or
- has, without provocation, attacked a person or animal (other than vermin) but without causing serious injury or death.

Under section 34 of the Act, where menacing behaviour is identified Council may take-action under the Act via the issuing of Orders to declare a dog as a menacing dog. The owner of a declared menacing dog must comply with the control requirements of the Act which includes amongst other things:

- the dog must be de-sexed;
- when on the property on which the dog is ordinarily kept and not under the effective control of a person of or above the age of 18 years, the dog must be enclosed in a manner that is sufficient to restrain the dog and prevent a child from having access to the dog;
- whenever the menacing dog is outside the property on which the dog is ordinarily kept, the dog must be under the effective control of a competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash that is attached to the dog and that is being held by (or secured to) the person and must be muzzled in a manner that is sufficient to prevent it from biting any person or animal.

An owner of a declared menacing dog who does not comply with any of the requirements of the Act or Regulation is guilty of an offence and subject to penalties or prosecution. A menacing dog Order is not subject to any appeal or review.

#### **5.4.3.3 Dangerous & Restricted Dogs**

Under section 33 of the Act defines a dog as being dangerous if it:

- has, without provocation, attacked or killed a person or animal (other than vermin), or
- has, without provocation, repeatedly threatened to attack or repeatedly chased a person or animal (other than vermin), or
- is kept or used for the purposes of hunting except a dog which is used only to locate, flush, point or retrieve birds or vermin.



Under section 34 of the Act, where a dangerous dog is identified, Council may take-action under the Act via the issuing of Orders to declare the dog as dangerous.

Section 55 of the Act identifies several restricted dogs, which includes:

- American pit bull terrier or pit bull terrier,
- Japanese tosa,
- dogo Argentino,
- fila Brasileiro,
- any other dog of a breed, kind, or description whose importation into Australia is prohibited by or under the *Customs Act 1901* of the Commonwealth,
- any other dog of a breed, kind or description prescribed by the Regulations.

Cross breeds of the above breeds are also considered to be restricted dogs. Under section 58A and 58C, where Council is of the opinion that a dog is of a breed or cross breed of those mentioned above, action may be taken under the Act via the issuing of Orders to declare the dog as a restricted dog.

The owner of a declared dangerous or restricted dog must comply with the control requirements of the Act which includes amongst other things:

- the dog must be de-sexed;
- the dog must not at any time be in the sole charge of a person under the age of 18 years;
- while the dog is on property on which it is ordinarily kept the dog must be kept in an enclosure that complies with the requirements of the Regulation. A certificate of compliance in relation to the required enclosure must be obtained from Council;
- one or more signs must be displayed on that property on which the dog is kept showing the words "Warning Dangerous Dog" in letters clearly visible from the boundaries of the property;
- the dog must always wear a designated distinctive collar;
- whenever the dog is outside its enclosure the dog must be under the effective control of a competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash that is attached to the dog and that is being held by (or secured to) the person and must be muzzled in a manner that is sufficient to prevent it from biting any person or animal.

An owner of a declared dangerous or restricted dog who does not comply with any of the requirements of the Act or Regulation is guilty of an offence and subject to penalties or prosecution.

#### **5.4.4 Management of Cats**

Under section 30 of the Act, cats are prohibited in the following places:

- food preparation/consumption areas which includes any public place, or part of a public place, that is within 10 metres of any apparatus used for the preparation of food for human consumption or for the consumption of food by humans;
- wildlife protection areas. Council currently does not have any designated wildlife protection areas within its LGA.

##### **5.4.4.1 Nuisance cats**

The Act defines a cat as being a nuisance if it:

- makes a noise that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort, or convenience of any person in any other premises, or
- repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

Dealing with nuisance cat complaints is difficult as cats are more difficult to confine to a property than dogs. Each complaint needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that a domestic cat that has not been declared to be a nuisance by the Council cannot be seized and impounded. Such a cat must be returned to its owner if identified.

Under section 31 of the Act, where nuisance behaviour is identified Council may take action under the Act via the issuing of Orders to declare a cat as a nuisance cat. The Order may specify the behaviour of the cat that must be prevented. Such an Order remains in force for six (6) months from the date it was issued and is not subject to any appeal or review. Failure to comply with a Nuisance Order is an offence under the Act and is subject to penalties or prosecution.

Council also provides cat traps for hire (via payment of a bond) to assist residents with nuisance cats. Where a resident catches a cat in the trap, they are required to contact Council who will collect the animal and attempt to return it to its owner and provide education about preventing their cat from creating nuisances.

#### **5.4.5 Lost Pets & Stray Dogs**

Dog owners are required to keep their pet contained within an adequate enclosure. There are penalties under the Act where an owner fails to keep their pet safe in their yard.

Council understands that there are situations where a pet may get lost or be found wandering. When this occurs, authorised officers will attempt to reunite the pet with its owner as soon as possible using details contained on its microchip or any contact information on identification tags. Where authorised officers cannot return the pet to its owner right away, it will be safely housed in Council's Animal Management Facility until it can be reunited.

Where there are no contact details available or no microchip or where the contact details on the Companion Animal Register is not up to date, the lost pet will be taken straight to Council's Animal Management Facility and held for the minimum period required under the Act. The lost pet will be advertised on Council's website and social media pages to reunite the pet with its owner.

Under section 18 of the *Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021*, Council authorised officers can take possession of unattended animals in public places. Impoundment fees must be paid prior to release of the pet that has been held in Council's Animal Management Facility.

Where a dog is habitually at large and education has not worked with the owner, authorised officers will consider enforcement to resolve the problem. This may include issuing a Nuisance Dog Order under the Act (much like a good behaviour bond). If the problem continues, authorised officers will escalate the enforcement action.

#### **5.4.6 Identification & Registration**

##### **5.4.6.1 Microchipping**

Microchip identification is one aim of the Act designed to facilitate the efficient return of lost pets to their owners as soon as possible. Benefits of microchip identification also include:

- reduced stress being applied to the animal when seized due to less likelihood of extended confinement in the animal management facility;

- allowing an opportunity for Council's authorised officers to educate and/or take enforcement action where necessary.

The Act requires all cats and dogs in NSW, other than exempt cats and dogs, to be microchipped by 12 weeks of age or before being sold or given away, whichever happens first. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in penalties.

#### **5.4.6.2 Registration**

The Act requires all cats and dogs in NSW, other than those that are exempt, to be registered by six months of age. The registration fee is a once-only payment, which covers the cat or dog for its lifetime in NSW, regardless of any changes in ownership (lifetime registration). Discounted registration fees apply to de-sexed cats and dogs.

Registration fees are set by the State Government and are included in Council's Revenue Policy every year. Registration fees paid to Council are passed onto the State Government which uses this money for companion animal related services such as the administration of the Companion Animals Register. A portion of the registration fees is returned to Council and contributes to Council providing companion animal management related services to the community. These services include responding to customer requests, undertaking patrols, caring for animals in Council's animal management facility and other companion animal-related activities.

Any cat or dog that is impounded into Council's animal management facility must be microchipped and registered before being returned to its owner (even if it is less than six months old).

#### **5.4.7 Limits on the Number of Animals**

Council has adopted a Local Orders Policy under section 159 of the *Local Government Act 1993* which outlines the number of animals permitted on certain parcels of land. The aim of this Policy is to:

- Minimise the incidence of nuisance being caused to persons;
- Protect the welfare of companion animals;
- Protect the welfare and habitat of wildlife;
- Minimise the disturbance of or damage to protected vegetation; and
- Safeguard the environment.

Where possible, council will work with all parties to resolve issues that arise from the keeping of animals. Should the number or type of animal(s) kept at a certain premise be considered inappropriate and is causing one or more of the above issues as outlined in this Policy, Council will issue an Order on the occupier of the premise requiring them to take measures to reduce any impacts being caused.

#### **5.4.8 Animal Welfare**

Pet owners have a responsibility to look after their cat or dog's basic welfare needs, including:

- providing their cat or dog with an appropriate balanced diet and clean, cool water at all times;
- ensuring that their cat or dog has adequate shelter suitable for all weather conditions;
- ensuring that their cat or dog is well socialised, trained and exercised;
- ensuring their cat or dog's good health with regular veterinary check-ups, worming, tick, and flea treatments; and
- making sure that their cat or dog is looked after when you go away.

The RSPCA is responsible for investigating and responding to reports of animal welfare. Council authorised officers are at times called upon to assist RSPCA staff with their duties. Council will continue to work with the

RSPCA on local issues where appropriate. There are significant penalties under animal welfare and cruelty related legislation.

Owners which are not going to breed from their animals or do not have adequate means of dealing with litters are strongly encouraged to have their animals de-sexed. De-sexing has the capacity to reduce several unwanted animal behaviours including unwanted litters, roaming by male animals, territorial aggression, and noise complaints.

#### **5.4.9 Environmental Issues**

Animals can create negative impacts on the environment in several ways such as noise, pollution, land pollution and impacts on native fauna.

##### **5.4.9.1 Barking Dogs**

While all dogs bark, it is those that bark excessively that require management. Barking dogs account for a significant number of companion animal related complaints received by Council.

Barking dogs are a significant community problem and can result in loss of neighbourhood amenity, anxiety, sleep disruption and aggression. A dog's barking may be due to a variety of issues including territorial behaviour, boredom, separation anxiety, illness, visual stimuli/distraction or teasing.

Barking dog incidents are often difficult to resolve and consume extensive resources. It is the responsibility of the animal owner to control their animal including their barking issues.

Where Council receives a barking dog complaint, correspondence is sent to both the complainant and the owner of the dog or owner of the property on which the dog is being kept. The complainant is initially advised to approach the owner of the dog to make them aware of the situation and if the barking continues, to provide Council with a 14-day barking dog diary identifying the times, dates, and duration of the barking.

Usage of the diary system is useful in determining if a legitimate complaint exists and pinpoints the times of excessive barking. It also assists Council when developing solutions for the problem and forms part of the evidence required if more formal action is required to be taken.

In cases where multiple dogs located on a property are causing noise pollution due to barking and an individual noisy dog cannot be identified as causing the pollution, Council may elect to take-action under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* via the issuing of a Prevention Notice. This Notice can require the owner of the dogs to take such action which is deemed necessary to prevent or stop the nuisance barking.

Members of the public can elect to take-action in relation to barking dogs independent of Council via the seeking of a noise abatement Order under section 268 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* from the local court. There are fees for applying for a noise abatement Order. The register at the Local Court can be contacted to obtain information about the process for applying for a noise abatement Order.

##### **5.4.9.2 Pet Litter**

Faeces from companion animals is a significant environmental and public health issue. The pollution of urban yards, footpaths, parks, and reserves by animal faeces can result in pollution of waterways by stormwater run-off along with odour issues.

If a dog defecates in a public place the Act requires the owner or other person over the age of 16 which is in charge of the dog at the time to immediately remove the dog's faeces and properly dispose of them into a rubbish receptacle suitable for that waste. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in penalties.

Council provides appropriate poo-bags for animal faeces in various public spaces including the designated off-leash areas.

#### **5.4.9.3 Impact on Biodiversity**

It is vital that animal management strategies be implemented to assist with protection of native flora and fauna.

Domestic dogs and cats are responsible for many wildlife deaths every year particularly if allowed to roam unrestricted. Cats are very efficient hunters with research indicating that each free-roaming domestic cat kills on average 30 native animals per year.

The Act declares that the protection of native birds and animals is an objective of animal welfare policy in the State of NSW. Therefore, owners of companion animals have an obligation to prevent their animals from adversely impacting on wildlife.

It is considered that education strategies aimed at promoting the benefits of de-sexing, animal containment and management techniques play the primary role in reducing the impacts on the local biodiversity.

#### **5.4.10 Council Ranger Services**

Council's Ranger Team are responsible for companion animal duties under the Act. They are also responsible for delivering other non-companion animal services, such as:

- Parking regulation and enforcement;
- Investigation litter and illegal dumping incidents;
- Dealing with abandoned vehicles and goods;
- Stock on roads;
- Regulation of public spaces such as footpath dining, busking, street trading etc.;
- Investigating environmental nuisance such as noise, dust, odour, lighting, smoke, burning off etc.;
- Monitoring public roads and reserves; and
- Corowa Saleyards operations.

Council will endeavour to ensure there are sufficient staff resources to meet its legislative obligations under the Act. It will also ensure that the companion animal service is delivered in an effective and efficient manner. This will be done by:

- Regularly reviewing standard operating procedures;
- Networking with other councils within the region;
- Undertake required staff training; and
- Attending Ranger forums/conferences to keep in touch with best practice.

#### **5.4.11 On Call Service**

Council has an after-hours on call Ranger service to respond to incidents of aggressive dogs or dog attacks. The primary purpose of this service is to remove any danger to the public (if the situation is still occurring) and then to proceed with commencing an investigation into the incident.

Council does not have an after-hours on call Ranger service for stray or lost pets. In these instances, the public is encouraged to check the collar or tag for contact details of the owner. Other options may include contacting a local vet or if possible, holding the animal until the next business day when Council staff can attend. Often stray or lost pets will return home by their own means.

#### **5.4.12 Compliance**

Compliance and enforcement are important to:

- Prevent or minimise harm to health, welfare, safety, property, or the environment.
- To improve safety and amenity of residents and visitors in the area.
- For the collective good of all and protect the public's interest.
- To meet community expectations.

Council takes compliance matters seriously, particularly in relation to serious public safety offences under the Act, such as aggressive dogs and attacks.

Authorised officers will follow Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy when considering taking compliance action under the Act. They will also take a risk-based approach to companion animal management and enforcement. Decisions may be required to be made on the allocation of Council's limited resources, and these decisions are made in a way that balances risk, expected outcomes, resourcing requirements and consistency in action.

#### **5.4.13 Corowa Animal Management Facility**

Council's animal management facility is centrally located in Corowa. It provides a safe environment for pets to be housed while they are waiting to be reunited with their owner. In 2023-24, Council refurbished the Corowa Animal Management Facility and undertook the following improvements:

- Replaced the perimeter fence;
- Installed new signage;
- Painted the sheds;
- Installed whirly birds in the sheds;
- Updated lighting in the sheds;
- Fixed water pressure issues;
- New dog and cat beds and bedding; and
- Improved surrounding landscaping.

When providing its pound service, Council will:

- Take care of the daily sustenance and welfare requirements of pets being housed at the facility;
- Endeavour to keep the facility safe, secure, clean and in a well-maintained manner;
- Work with local rehoming services where a pet cannot be reunited with its owner; and
- Act promptly to reunite owners with their pets as soon as possible.

Impoundment fees must be paid prior to release of the pet that has been held in Council's animal management facility. All pets must be microchipped and registered prior to release from the Corowa Animal Management Facility. Council's authorised officers are authorised microchip implanters and can undertake this service. Impound, registration and microchip fees are in accordance with Council's Revenue Policy – Fees and Charges.

Council will not rehome aggressive dogs that it believes is unsafe to put back into the community.

#### 5.4.14 Off Leash Areas

Council acknowledges that dogs need areas where they can exercise, walk, and run without being on a leash. There are a range of benefits of having suitable off-leash areas available for people to exercise their dogs and for socialising with other dog owners. The regular use of off-leash areas can assist with reducing people having their dogs off-leash in other public places, relieve boredom of dogs which leads to more contented lives, and reduced problems for pet owners and the community, particularly those keeping large or energetic dogs in small or confined areas. It is also recognised that for some people, a dog is their main form of recreation and visits to off-leash areas can be part of their daily exercise routine.

Under section 13 (6) of the Act a local authority can by order declare a public place to be an off-leash area. Such a declaration can be limited to apply during a particular period or periods of the day or to different periods of different days. However, there must always be at least one public place in the area of a local authority that is an off-leash area.

Council has provided the following sites that are off leash areas:

- **Corowa:**
  - Ball Park Dog Off-Leash Area, adjacent to Bangerang Park – enclosed off-leash area.
  - Intersection of Federation Avenue and River Street, South Corowa.
- **Mulwala:**
  - Kyffins Reserve, 4.1km east of Mulwala, Spring Drive.
- **Howlong:**
  - South west corner of Lowe Square – enclosed off-leash area.
  - Memorial Park section area.

*Note: this is current at the time of writing this Plan and may change. Information about dog off-leash areas in Federation LGA can be found at: <https://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au/Living-Here/Keeping-Animals/Off-Leash-Areas>*

Council will be developing a Dog Off-Leash Areas Strategy to determine whether existing areas meet the needs of dog owners, whether any improvements may be required and if there are any locations that should be included or excluded as future dog off-leash areas.

#### 5.4.15 Emergency Management

Council plays an important role in local emergency management. Following the recent 2022 flood event, Council is in the process of updating its suite of emergency management plans. As part of this process, Council will review and update its emergency management plans in respect to management of companion animals in disasters, particularly in regards to:

- Providing information for owners about how they can be prepared for looking after their animals during a disaster; and
- How it will manage or provide facilities for animals at emergency evacuation centres and places of refuge.

### Budget & Funding

Under section 84 of the Act, the Companion Animal Fund was established, coinciding with lifetime registration of companion animals. The Fund is managed by the OLG. Under section 40 of the Regulation, the Department Chief Executive of OLG will determine the amount contributable to councils from the Fund.

In accordance with s85(1A), any money paid to a council from the Fund is to be used by the council only for the purposes that relate to the management and control of companion animals in its area.

For the 2023-24 period, Council expended \$96,160 in relation to companion animal duties under the Act. For this same period, council received \$13,239 from the Companion Animal Fund. This means that 14% of expenses was funded by the Fund and the remaining 86% funded by ratepayers. The revenue received from the Fund during this period contributed to funding the following activities:

- Responding to complaints about companion animals;
- Returning lost pets to their home;
- Caring for lost pets at council's animal management facility;
- Investigating aggressive animals and attacks; and
- Undertaking proactive patrols of community areas to ensure owners are doing the right thing.

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## 6. Action Plans

In order to achieve the objectives of this Plan, action plans have been developed and are included below. Each Action Plan has been developed to include Council's statutory requirements under the Act, the standards outlined under this Plan and other Council commitments listed in Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

### 6.1 Objective 1: Improve registration and identification of cats and dogs

Actions	Indicator	Resources	Timeline	Responsible
Follow up with unregistered dogs and cats from the Companion Animal Register	Letters sent to pet owners on a six-monthly basis.	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Manager Customer Service & IT
Follow up with unregistered dogs and cats when responding companion animal management matters	Notices/Orders issued to pet owners when made aware of registration status.	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer
Ensure all lost and impounded animals are registered prior to their release	As pets are released.	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer

### 6.2 Objective 2: Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership

Actions	Indicator	Resources	Timeline	Responsible
Continue to provide Free Microchipping Days for dogs and cats	Two events held per year	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Coordinator Ranger, Saleyards & Town Services
Continue to deliver Pet Day Out events	One event per year	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Coordinator Ranger, Saleyards & Town Services

<b>Continue to utilise council's corporate website, social media, newsletters etc. to promote principles responsible pet ownership</b>	Minimum six publications per year	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Manager Communications & Engagement
<b>Review all education material presently provided by Council and expand and update as appropriate</b>	Reviews undertaken	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Coordinator Ranger, Saleyards & Town Services

### 6.3 Objective 3: Protect public safety, the environment and amenity

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indictor</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>Undertake proactive patrols of public spaces to ensure dog owners are complying with the requirements relating to leashing, effective control, and dog faeces</b>	Minimum three patrols undertaken per week	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer
<b>Utilise the Local Orders Policy – Keeping of Animals &amp; Birds to resolve animal welfare, environmental and/or nuisance matters</b>	Customer requests actioned within response and resolution KPI's	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer
<b>Conduct inspections of premises where declared dangerous dogs are kept</b>	Annual inspection per dog/property	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer
<b>Continue to implement the Barking Dog Procedure to respond to customer requests about barking</b>	Customer requests actioned within response and resolution KPI's	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer

<b>Continue to implement the Dog Attack Investigation Procedure to respond to customer requests about aggressive dogs and attacks</b>	Customer requests actioned within response and resolution KPI's	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer
<b>Provide a cat trap hire program for residents</b>	Provide trap upon hire as required.	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer

#### 6.4 Objective 4: Implement effective compliance, enforcement, and animal management strategies

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indictor</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>Continue to provide an out of hours response for aggressive dogs and dog attacks</b>	On call authorised officer rostered on – weekly	Utilising existing resources	Every year	Coordinator Ranger, Saleyards & Town Services
<b>Continue to review and update the Local Orders Policy – Keeping of Animals &amp; Birds as required</b>	Policy kept current and update to date	Utilising existing resources	Every 4 years	Manager Environment, Facilities & Regulations
<b>Continue to review and update the Compliance and Enforcement Policy</b>	Policy kept current and update to date	Utilising existing resources	Every 4 years	Manager Environment, Facilities & Regulations
<b>Ensure Standard Operating Procedures are regularly reviewed – e.g., barking dog and dog attacks.</b>	Policy kept current and update to date	Utilising existing resources	Every 2 years	Manager Environment, Facilities & Regulations
<b>Complete legislative reporting requirements in relation to companion animals</b>	Dog attack reporting under the Act is completed for each incident	Utilising existing resources	Dog attack to OLG reported as incidents occur.	Ranger and/or Regulatory Compliance Officer
	Companion animal management duties as per	Utilising existing resources	Annual report completed every year.	Manager Environment, Facilities & Regulations

	the Local Government (General) Regulation in the Annual Report.			
<b>Review and update Council's Emergency Management Plan in respect to management of companion animals in disasters</b>	Emergency management plan updated.	Utilising existing resources	Completed in 2025-26	Manager Infrastructure
<b>Ensure authorised officers and staff involved in delivering companion animal management service have appropriate training</b>	Training provided.	Utilising existing resources	Every year.	Manager Environment, Facilities & Regulations

## 6.5 Objective 5: Provide facilities in public spaces that support responsible pet ownership

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>Develop a Dog Off-Leash Strategy</b>	Strategy adopted	Utilising existing resources	Completed in 2024-25	Manager Environment, Facilities & Regulations
<b>Continue to maintain existing dog off-leash areas</b>	Facilities maintained	Within existing budget	Every year	Manager Recreation
<b>Seeking funding opportunities to upgrade and improve existing dog off-leash areas</b>	Funding sourced	External funding required	Ongoing	Manager Recreation

## 7. References & Associated Documents

- Companion Animals Act 1998
- Companion Animals Regulation 2018
- NSW Office for Local Government (OLG) Guideline on the Exercise of Functions Under the Companion Animals Act
- Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2021
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021
- Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997
- Council's Delivery Program and Operation Plan
- Council's Local Orders Policy – Keeping of Animals & Birds

## 8. Policy History

Version	Date	Changes / Amendments
1	2014	Initial draft Adopted by Council December 2014
2	19 Feb 2019	Review of document and new template Adopted by Council February 20219
3	December 2024	Comprehensive review and update of document throughout, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New purpose, scope, objectives, and responsibilities</li><li>• Updated information about pet ownership</li><li>• Updated legislative context and references</li><li>• Inclusion of IP&amp;R links</li><li>• Updated background</li><li>• Updated information about Council's Companion Animal Management Service</li><li>• Inclusion of information about budget and funding</li><li>• Revised Action Plan with clear indicators, resourcing, timelines, and responsibilities</li></ul>

## 9. Reviews

This Plan will be reviewed every four years.

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