



# Animal Management Strategy

2017-2021





## Introduction

Pets are an important part of peoples' lives and contribute to their wellbeing and the provision of companionship. They are companions for relaxation, physical activity, and or for teaching our children responsibility.

Statistically, Australia has one of the highest levels of pet ownership in the world with approximately 62% of households owning a companion animal.

The Mackay Regional Animal Management Strategy endorses the vision "your pet, your responsibility" which signifies that keeping a pet is a lifelong commitment and a responsibility both socially and economically. Council and community will need to work together in progressing this vision, which when implemented effectively, will ultimately lead to an enhanced community wellbeing for all.

## Council's Corporate Plan

The corporate plan is an important document that will guide decision making for the next five years. It sets out the strategic direction and priorities for council.

The plan includes eight priority areas covering economy, community pride, regional identity, community health and wellbeing, environment, infrastructure, lifelong learning and organisational performance.

Developing and implementing an animal management strategy is part of Environmental Health under the Community Health and Wellbeing guiding principle of the corporate plan.

The Animal Management Strategy aligns itself to the corporate plan. It assists council to meet the objectives of the corporate plan by endeavouring to provide the community with a safe, healthy and accessible community that celebrates a diverse range of services and facilities.

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## Objectives

The Animal Management Strategy 2017-2021 addresses issues associated with responsible pet ownership against the framework of council's legislative requirements under the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* and Council's Local Laws.

### **The objectives of the Animal Management Strategy 2017-2021 are:**

1. Improve the number of animals registered within the Mackay region
2. Promote "responsible pet ownership" to further enhance the community's attitude towards animal ownership
3. Develop innovative and proactive approaches to the Animal Management Centre.
4. Enhance staff professionalism, service levels and interactions with the community

## Consultation with the community

This document has been developed in conjunction with a range of stakeholders including councillors, relevant internal staff, and community/industry experts.

Feedback and advice was also sought from animal welfare groups for inclusion into the draft plan. The draft plan was then released for community consultation. The Animal Management Strategy will be reviewed in 2021 or earlier if legislation should substantially change.



## Objective 1:

### Improve the number of animals registered within the Mackay region

#### Identification and registration are crucial components of any successful animal management program.

The introduction of the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* has created a statewide approach to the registration of dog/cat registrations and microchipping.

The council register database is an important tool used for returning lost pets and identifying offending animals. It is therefore important that owner's details are kept up to date. Council has a commitment to update all notified information changes in a timely fashion.

#### The advantages of animal registration are:

- Animals are more likely to be returned to owners in a timely fashion
- It reduces the need for unidentified animals to be rehomed or euthanised
- Reduces the number animals and/or time spent in the animal management centre
- Ensures owners comply with their statutory requirements to have their animal registered
- Allows a history of the animal to be developed on council systems
- The register data can be utilised to directly contact relevant owners to provide information and educational material on pet ownership
- A "proof of ownership" identification system for all registered animals

- Maintenance of council AMC and off-lead dog areas.
- Equipment, fencing, and bag dispensers
- Provides for council staff which works towards providing a safe and educated community around responsible pet ownership

#### Mackay Region Dog/cat registration numbers

| Year      | Cats | Dogs   | Total  |
|-----------|------|--------|--------|
| 2013 - 14 | 2142 | 10,938 | 13,080 |
| 2014 - 15 | 2197 | 11,338 | 13,535 |
| 2015 - 16 | 2291 | 11,994 | 14,285 |
| 2016 - 17 | 2416 | 12,943 | 15,359 |

Council records indicate there are approximately 15,000 registered animals in the Mackay region. Around 13,000 of these are registered dogs. Council recognises there are likely to be unregistered pets in the region. An analysis of the Animal Management Benchmark Surveys supports this theory with some other regional areas indicating a higher density of registered dogs in their communities.

Reporting on exact figures within the region is very difficult given some owners may not have registered or notified council when animals have been relocated.





## **Strategy – Increase animal registrations**

Past years have seen council run a number of registration days for pets within the Mackay region. Additionally, any seized or collected animals are microchipped and must be registered before they are re-homed.

Council continues to issue correspondence during times of registration to ensure owners renew their registration details along with incentives, such as:

- Discounted payment periods and offering registration at pro-rata rates are offered to encourage owner's renewal of their animal registration
- Reminders are generated to make contact with owners who have animals un-registered from previous years

## **Current and ongoing actions**

- Continue with regular reminder registration notices
- Promotion of identification and microchip requirements in educational material
- Continuation of discounted microchipping/ registration days
- Registration of unidentified seized/collected animals before releasing to owners
- Continue to update council animal register in a timely manner
- Owners that are identified are encouraged to register their animals and are provided with timeframes to ensure compliance
- Apply penalties to those owners who have previous history of refusal to register animals

## **Proposed actions**

- Explore the effectiveness of proactive surveys within street addresses to identify residents who own animals that are not registered
- Utilise population figures against animal registrations and benchmarks to gauge animal registration targets within the Mackay region
- Identify methods of micro-chipping before release from the Animal Management Centre
- Identify and participate in community education programs to re-enforce requirements to register and microchip animals
- Investigate opportunities to participate in community education programs to re-enforce requirements to register and microchip animals
- Explore options of impoundments with first-time registered animals

## Objective 2: Promote “responsible pet ownership” to further enhance the community’s attitude towards pet ownership

**Cats and dogs provide unconditional love and companionship. However, the registration, health, welfare and safety of animals are only part of responsible pet ownership. Owners are legally liable in ensuring they manage their pet in such a way that it is compliant with all relevant laws, is well behaved, does not create a nuisance with the community or the environment and, most importantly, that one’s pets do not endanger others.**

Council tips for being a responsible pet owner:

- Select the appropriate pet that will suit your lifestyle and circumstances
- Support the rules of breeders and purchase from a reputable breeder
- Register and microchip your pet
- Provide a proper enclosure to contain your pet within your property. This includes cats
- Make your pet part of the family. Pets need companionship also
- Exercise your pet and ensure your pet is under effective control
- Respect neighbours – ensure your pets’

behaviour is respectful in your absence

Animal management of dogs and cats involves:

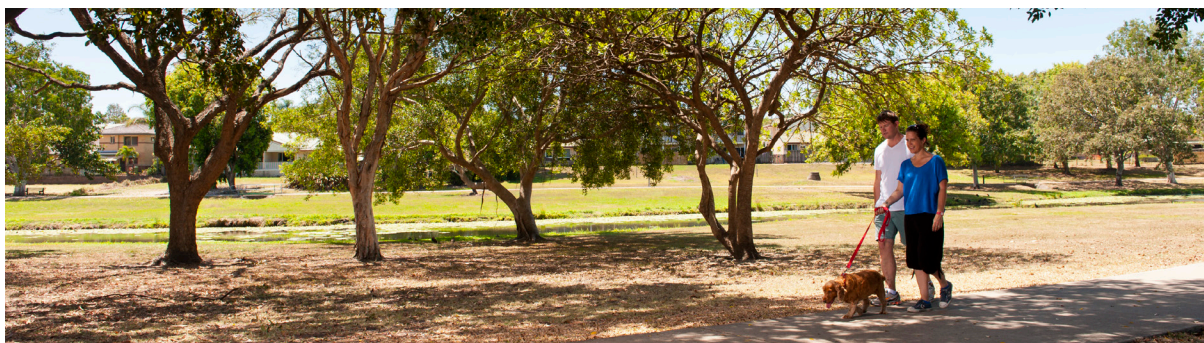
- Provision of public off-leash facilities and exercise areas
- Dealing with lost and found animals
- Effective and safe animal handling
- Management of barking dog complaints
- Investigation of dog attacks

To assist the community in maintaining a responsible pet ownership approach, council investigates animal related complaints, as well as carrying out routine and proactive patrols.

In 2014/2015 council investigated 1638 complaints/reports regarding animal issues, and 1793 in the 2015/2016 financial year.

Some matters reported to council can be resolved promptly, particularly when animals are registered and owners are located. However, other issues such as barking dogs and dog attacks require detailed investigations which can be complex and can take considerable time to resolve.

Many animal-related requests can be linked to irresponsible pet ownership as the contributing factor. Many are potentially civil in nature, which can be resolved or improved by pet owners taking appropriate actions to resolve the issue.



## Current and ongoing actions

- Proactive patrols
- Participation in community events and programs
- Continue to update council website and social media, including promotion of responsible pet ownership
- Complaint investigation
- Continue with registration day program
- Continue school visits within the region promoting:
  - > Australian Vet Association
  - > Pets and People Education Program

## Proposed Actions

- Seek out further opportunities to engage in relevant community events and educational programs.
- Facilitate stakeholder events to discuss relevant issues which promote the responsible pet ownership initiative
- Provide opportunities for residents and community groups to provide feedback on service delivery and quality
- Explore the use of online and mobile technologies for investigation of animal-related complaints
- Distribution of educational material at:
  - > Veterinary clinics
  - > Pet retail shops
  - > Boarding kennels
- Investigate partnership opportunities with local animal shelters and veterinary services to implement and promote reduced fee desexing initiatives
- Explore opportunities to provide additional off-leash areas

## Objective 3:

### Develop innovative and proactive approaches to the Animal Management Centre

#### In 2016 Local Laws officers impounded 993 dogs and 529 cats.

This is an average of 19 dogs and 10 cats per week. The current facility has capacity for 27 separate cages. The Animal Management Centre (AMC) is often at full capacity, and it is expected that animal ownership in line with population growth will increase within the Mackay region.

Council's website maintains an online system which assists people who have lost an animal or who wish to adopt a pet. Every effort is made to contact owners, however when statutory periods of time have expired, animals may be offered to adoption agencies, offered for sale, or as a last resort, euthanised.

Excluding sick or dangerous animals, the AMC in 2016 has achieved a re-homing rate of approximately 92% for dogs and 67% for cats.

#### Number of animals sent to the AMC

| Year | Cats | Dogs  | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 2014 | 97   | 452   | 549   |
| 2015 | 361  | 1,003 | 1,364 |
| 2016 | 529  | 993   | 1,522 |

#### The Animal Management and AMC operations/procedures include:

- Accepting of dogs from either public or private property. This is in instances where the dog is believed to have compromised the community's safety
- Impounding cats, if provided to the AMC in a secured cage or container
- Responding to complaints and carrying out random patrols for straying animals
- Scanning collected animals for a microchip and registration history
- Identifying the owner and arrangements to return the animal
- Homing of non-compliant declared dogs or repeat offenders.





## Current and ongoing actions

- Found and surrendered animals are transported to the AMC
- Reuniting found/seized animals where possible
- Stray dog capture and collection
- Registration of unidentified seized/collected animals before releasing to owners
- Commitment to reducing euthanasia rates by maintaining current relations with existing animal adoption agencies
- Provision of educational and informative material on council's website
- Senior pets initiative for adoption of older animals

## Proposed Actions

- Investigate opportunities to increase the opening hours of the AMC
- Explore further opportunities to promote adoption of animals with adoption agencies
- Increase and improve community education campaigns within the region
- Audit current operating procedures for opportunities to improve efficiencies and needs of the AMC to ensure fees remain as low as possible
- Investigate opportunities for applying penalties for wandering animals rather than imposing release fees

## Objective 4:

# Enhance staff professionalism, service levels and interactions with the community

### Council has an animal management team consisting of specially trained officers.

These officers are well-equipped to control and enforce matters pertaining to animal management, which relate to the best interests of the community, and in accordance with legislation.

Council recognises properly motivated and trained staff are required in order to meet the service demands of the Mackay region. Training and professional development of local law officers enable accurate and confident service delivery.

### Proposed actions

- Explore alternative measures to maintain the confidence and expertise in local laws officers
- Explore opportunities to increase the community's knowledge of what service Local Laws Officers provide
- Ensure current staff levels are in alignment with expected service levels.

### Current and ongoing actions

- Identify issues and resources required for education and regulatory services regarding animal management
- Support animal management officers to attend in-house training, conferences and external training events where possible
- As a continuous improvement process, regularly review standard operating procedures to ensure systems and processes support animal management officers to fulfil their roles efficiently and lawfully
- Continue to explore improvement opportunities with council systems so as they continue to support, and maintain efficiency with local law operations

# Development, Review and Reporting

## **This Animal Management Strategy is heavily influenced by legislative changes and political impacts.**

It is important that this document provides flexibility. This will allow for changes and influences derived from councilors, staff, stakeholders, and the community. It will help to shape the document both now and into the future.

## **Reporting**

Reporting performance of the strategy will be provided using internal operating figures and benchmark reports.

## **Yearly Review**

The aims of the Animal Management Strategy 2017-2021 will be reviewed annually to:

- Ensure it aligns with the objectives of council corporate and operational plans
- Ensure that each action considers:
  - > Responsibility  
Which council branch will lead and support the implementation of current and ongoing actions
  - > Funding  
Ensure that objectives have been afforded adequate financial resources
  - > Timeline  
When the action will be implemented
  - > Measures  
How the success of each objective is determined or measured
- Ensure the outcomes are achievable and align to community expectations.





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