



**ANIMAL
MANAGEMENT
STRATEGY
2020 - 2023**



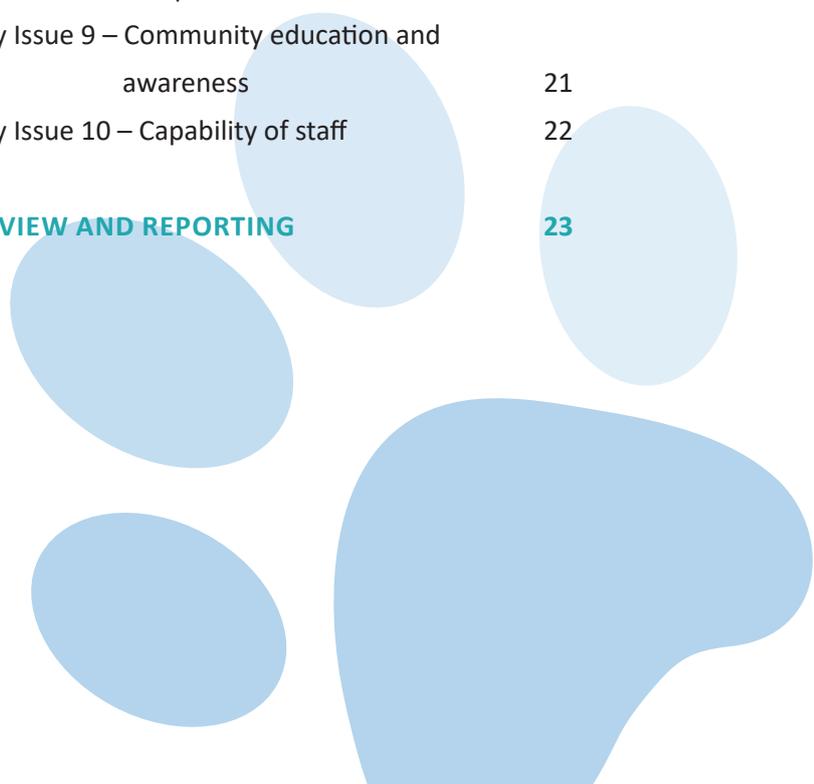
Rockhampton
Regional Council





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Responsibility

PART OF
THE
PACK





O V E R V I E W

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Introduction

Objective

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Links to Council's
Corporate Plan

Vision/Objective/
Outcomes

Legislative Framework





INTRODUCTION

The effective management of animals requires a commitment from the entire Rockhampton Region community.

Council's Local Laws Unit activities are aimed at improving the safety and social amenity of the region but can only be truly effective with the cooperation of pet owners and the broader community.

Current services provided include:

- investigation of dog attacks and aggressive dogs,
- investigation of animal nuisances,
- management of regulated dogs,
- registration of dogs and if approved, cats,
- provision of property-based approvals for the keeping of animals,
- impoundment and release of stray and wandering animals,
- patrols of public spaces,
- community education,
- disaster management response and recovery.

Rockhampton Regional Council as a responsible local government seeks to provide and maintain a safe, caring and healthy environment and recognises effective animal management is part of that scenario.

Consequently, as part of its planning and delivery it requires an Animal Management Strategy:

- to provide clear and unambiguous direction from Council to its organisation on how it expects the animal management function to be conducted,
- to enable the Local Laws Unit to operate with clear and consistent responses so all circumstances are treated in a consistent and fair manner,
- to provide the community with clarity as to the Council's approach to animal management and its expectations of animal owners.

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the Animal Management Strategy 2020 - 2023 are:

- to ensure pet owners are educated and aware of the principles of responsible animal ownership,
- to ensure animals in the community are appropriately controlled and contained,
- to improve animal identification and reuniting of wandering or stray animals with their owners,
- to encourage voluntary compliance with State and local laws,
- to ensure any necessary interventions are conducted equitably, efficiently and humanely.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Education to raise awareness of responsible animal ownership behavior.

Incentives to encourage voluntary compliance.

Intervention

- to seek owner cooperation in remedying minor non-compliance,
- to act decisively in cases of danger to public health and safety.

Penalties to deter repeated or deliberate breaches of state and local laws.

LINKS TO COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN

Council's Corporate Plan 2017 - 2022 sets the strategic direction and priorities.

Theme: Community

Goal: A connected community that values a sense of belonging, where residents celebrate their diversity and have modern services available to support a safe, healthy and engaged lifestyle now and into the future.

Outcomes:

- Safe, accessible, reliable and sustainable infrastructure and facilities,
- Safe places for our community,
- Inclusive, connected and informed community.



VISION



Your Pet, Your Responsibility



OBJECTIVES

Ensure animal owners are educated and aware of the principles of responsible animal ownership.	Ensure animals in the community are appropriately controlled and contained.	Improve animal identification and reuniting of wandering and stray animals with their owners.	Encourage voluntary compliance with State and local laws.	Ensure any necessary interventions are conducted equitably, fairly, efficiently and humanely.
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OUTCOMES



All dogs are registered, desexed and microchipped. All cats are desexed and microchipped. There is a reduction in the number of matters requiring enforcement and prosecution. Responsible animal ownership initiatives are supported and delivered across the region.	There is a reduction in the number of public nuisances created by cats and dogs (wandering, attacking, barking). There is a reduction in the number of animals needing to be impounded. There is a reduction in the number of matters requiring enforcement and prosecution.	There is a reduction in the number of unidentifiable or unwanted cats and dogs. There is an increase in the proportion of wandering or impounded animals that are reunited with their owners.	There is a reduction in the number of matters requiring enforcement and prosecution.	Complaints about Council's actions and interventions are minimised.
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LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Council's Local Laws Unit is responsible for the administration and enforcement of a range of State and local laws throughout the Rockhampton Region. The legal framework associated with animal management includes:

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008*
- *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Regulation 2019*
- *Local Law No. 1 (Administration) 2011*
- *Subordinate Local Law No. 1.5 (Keeping of Animals) 2011*
- *Local Law No. 2 (Animal Management) 2011*
- *Subordinate Local Law No. 2 (Animal Management) 2011*

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT (CATS AND DOGS) ACT 2008

The purpose of the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* is to:

- provide for the identification of cats and dogs,
- provide for the registration of dogs and if adopted, cats,
- provide for the effective management of regulated dogs,
- promote the responsible ownership of cats and dogs.

LOCAL LAW NO. 1 (ADMINISTRATION) 2011 AND SUBORDINATE LOCAL LAW NO. 1.5 (KEEPING OF ANIMALS) 2011

The purpose of *Local Law No. 1 (Administration) 2011* is to provide a legal and procedural framework for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the local government's local laws, subordinate local laws and specified regulatory powers under legislation and to provide for miscellaneous administrative matters.

The purpose of *Subordinate Local Law No. 1.5 (Keeping of Animals) 2011* is to supplement Local Law No. 1. In particular, the legal and procedural framework for the keeping of animals.

LOCAL LAW NO. 2 (ANIMAL MANAGEMENT) 2011 AND SUBORDINATE LOCAL LAW NO. 2 (ANIMAL MANAGEMENT) 2011

The purpose of *Local Law No. 2 (Animal Management) 2011* and its subordinate local law is to regulate and manage the keeping and control of animals in a way that:

- balances community expectations with the rights of individuals,
- protects the community against risks to health and safety,
- prevents pollution and other environmental damage,
- protects the amenity of the local community and environment.

STRATEGIC LINKS TO OTHER LEGISLATION

Local government must ensure the strategy does not breach the requirements of other legislation. Legislation local government needs to consider includes the:

- *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2009

Although not containing specific provisions relating to animal management the *Local Government Act 2009*, provides the framework on when and how a local government may develop a local law.



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KEY ISSUES

IN THIS SECTION

Key Issue 1 – Animals not being under effective control

Key Issue 2 – Unregistered dogs

Key Issue 3 – Unidentified cats and dogs

Key Issue 4 – Unwanted cats and dogs

Key Issue 5 – Animal Management Centre

Key Issue 6 – Animal noise nuisance

Key Issue 7 – Animal management local laws

Key Issue 8 – Animal management policies and procedures

Key Issue 9 – Community education and awareness

Key Issue 10 – Capability of staff





ANIMALS NOT BEING UNDER EFFECTIVE CONTROL

KEY ISSUE 1

In 2019, Council received over 2,100 notifications of wandering or restrained animals. In total, over 950 dogs and 890 cats were collected and taken to the Animal Management Centre.

These dogs account for the majority of animals impounded by Council and generally have escaped under, over, or through a fence, gate or property boundary and have not been under the control of their owner or keeper.

Animals not securely enclosed, wandering or not under effective control may result in:

- attacks causing physical injury to a person,
- emotional impacts on the victim, dog owner and families,
- attacks on animals (pets and livestock) causing injury or death,
- rush or menacing attacks causing fear,
- motor vehicle accidents,
- spread of disease (such as Parvo Virus and Feline HIV) and parasites,
- propagation of unwanted litters,
- fouling of footpaths and properties,
- disturbance or nuisance in the neighborhood.

The impact of an attack or experiencing aggressive behaviour from an animal is not only immediate but often results in lasting physical and emotional trauma.

While dog attacks and complaints about aggressive dogs total around 300 per year, anecdotal evidence suggests that this figure is not indicative of the actual incidences occurring.

This may be due to:

- victims may not report attacks or aggression because of the potential ramifications for themselves, their families or friends,
- owners and victims may settle through agreement to provide compensation, payment of vet/medical bills etc,
- organisations such as hospital, police and vets not having established clearly defined reporting or recording mechanisms linking with Council,
- people accepting attacks and aggressive behaviours are natural (dogs chase cats, and dogs guard properties etc.).

1.1 DOG ATTACKS AND AGGRESSIVE DOGS TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY ATTENTION

Council will ensure dog attacks and aggressive dogs continue to be given priority attention.

Council will:

- respond immediately to dog attacks,
- dogs surrendered as a result of attack will be euthanised after a 24 hour cooling off period,
- regulated dog declarations and penalties will be invoked according to the circumstances and legislative requirements,
- aggressive dog complaints will be given investigation priority to reduce Council's risk of exposure to the potential of the aggressive behaviour, subsequently resulting in an attack causing injury or even death,
- inform customers of the outcome of investigations and Council actions in relation to dog attacks and threats of attack – subject to privacy considerations.

1.2 DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS WILL BE EFFECTIVELY MANAGED

Dog off-leash areas are valued by the community and provide the opportunity for owners to exercise and socialise their dogs.

Council will:

- require dogs to be under effective control within off-leash areas and be on-leash in transit to and from the facility,
- design off-leash areas to separate large and small dogs and to minimise nuisance to the adjoining community,
- include dog off-leash areas and their access routes in rostered local law patrols,
- use dog off-leash areas to publicise activities relating to dog training, behavior and barking control to encourage voluntary compliance,
- alert users of dog off-leash areas to region wide disease outbreaks,
- attach to regulatory signs "Manners" for owners and their dogs using the off-leash areas to encourage appropriate behavior and voluntary compliance.

The Local Laws Unit will continue to provide advice and guidance as to suitable locations and designs for future off-leash areas.

1.3 WANDERING ANIMALS WILL BE RETURNED ON FIRST OFFENCE

Council will:

- return free of charge non-aggressive dogs found wandering to their owner on the first offence prior to being impounded when the dog is registered and microchipped and where the owner is able to be contacted and available to secure the dog immediately,
- provide the owner advice as to the requirement to contain the dog at all times and arrangements will be made to conduct a gate and fence check with the owner to ensure the dog can be secured on the property in future,
- if impounded and the dog is a "first impound", the dog may be released free of charge – but only if the dog is registered and microchipped, is claimed within one day and it has not been previously returned to the owner, otherwise normal Animal Management Centre release procedures will apply.

Other animals, not being stock, found wandering may be returned to their owner prior to being impounded where the owner is able to be contacted and available to secure the animal immediately. If the animal is a cat it must also be microchipped. Otherwise the animal will be impounded.

1.4 WANDERING STOCK AND OTHER ANIMALS WILL BE ADDRESSED BY EFFECTIVE PROCESSES

Council's responsibilities for animal management extend beyond dogs. Roaming and unregistered stock, cats and other large animals pose specific problems particularly at night.

Council will:

- maintain an effective process for wandering stock and other animals,
- increase interventions for wandering cats.



UNREGISTERED DOGS

KEY ISSUES 2

The *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* places a mandatory requirement for dogs over 12 weeks of age to be registered with the relevant local government.

The *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* also places a mandatory requirement on the owner of a dog to give notice of changed information to Council within seven days of the change.

“Return to sender” registration notices and tags received following the annual mail out of renewals indicate a large number of owners do not update their personal address details with Council. This impacts on Council’s ability to reunite animals with their owners.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

2.1 COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Council will:

- educate the community on the need to register and microchip all dogs,
- educate the community on the need to keep name, address, phone numbers and email information up to date at every interaction with Council.

2.2 ENSURE EFFICIENT DATA MANAGEMENT

Council will:

- conduct data cleansing of all unpaid dog registrations to confirm resident contact details,
- review its information technology systems and consider the use of emerging technology.

2.3 USE INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE REGISTRATION

Council will:

- promote the registration of puppies under 6 months of age at a reduced rate.

2.4 SYSTEMATIC INSPECTIONS AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS WILL BE CONDUCTED

Council will:

- conduct periodic systematic inspections for unregistered dogs in accordance with legislation and available staffing resources,
- review Council’s Enforcement Strategy relating to animal management to encourage voluntary compliance through an initial notice and compliance period before infringement action is considered.

2.5 IMPOUNDED DOGS NOT RELEASED UNLESS REGISTERED

Council will:

- ensure all dogs released from the Animal Management Centre are registered.



UNIDENTIFIED CATS AND DOGS

3 E S S U E S I S S U E S I S S U E S

The Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008 places a mandatory requirement for cats and dogs to be microchipped before they are supplied (given away, sold, exchanged) and for a person who is the owner of or becomes an owner of a cat or dog to have the animal microchipped before 12 weeks of age.

The Act also requires the owner of a cat or dog to give notice of the changed information within seven days of the change.

For example - ownership transfer of the cat or dog must be supplied to the original microchip provider to be able to ensure an animal is returned to its owner. Many animals cannot be reunited with their owner as the microchip details are not up to date, particularly the current owner's name and phone number.

Local Laws Officers carry microchip scanners and are able to identify the owner of a cat or dog if the animal is microchipped and the microchip details are up to date.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

3.1 COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Council will:

- ensure emails and mobile numbers are collected at the point of registration and explore emerging technology to publicise cat and dog microchipping requirements and the need to keep records up to date,
- promote key messages via communication channels including social media, encouraging owners to microchip their cats and dogs,

- develop a process to ensure owners are reminded to update the microchip details of their cats and dogs when moving to a new house or changing telephone numbers,
- ensure microchipping information is provided to new or relocating residents.

3.2 USE INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE MICROCHIPPING

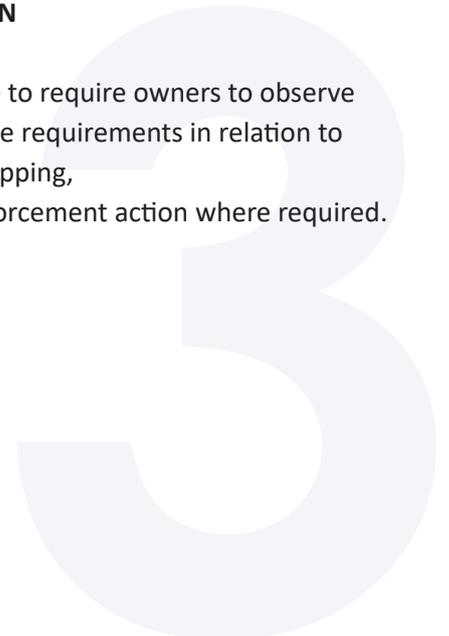
Council will:

- consider offering a fee based microchipping service and investigate the training and qualifications needed by staff for this implementation,
- implement compulsory microchipping of impounded cats and dogs at the Animal Management Centre inline with the requirement of *the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* and local law.

3.3 ENFORCEMENT OF MICROCHIPPING LEGISLATION

Council will:

- continue to require owners to observe legislative requirements in relation to microchipping,
- take enforcement action where required.





UNWANTED CATS AND DOGS

KEY ISSUES

In 2019, Council received 310 dogs and 314 cats at the Animal Management Centre which were surrendered to Council by their owners.

The principal cause of the growth in numbers of unwanted animals is the failure of owners to desex cats and dogs. 97% of impounded cats and 80% of impounded dogs are entire.

Entire dogs are twice as likely to be involved in bite related incidents.

The high volume of unwanted animals being impounded means an increasing rate of euthanasia, which is distressing to the community and especially to the veterinarians and Council staff who must deal with the final act.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

4.1 COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Council will:

- conduct regular promotions to encourage responsible pet ownership including desexing,
- ensure through an ongoing program of education the community is aware of cat and dog ownership responsibilities and ownership is regulated and infringement penalties apply.

4.2 USE INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE DESEXING

Council will:

- continue to offer reduced registration fees for desexed and microchipped dogs,
- continue to offer desexing and microchipping vouchers for qualifying persons,

- review the schedule of animal management fees and charges to reward responsible owners who have desexed their dogs by reducing animal management centre release fees provided the dog is also registered and microchipped and claimed within the statutory five days.

4.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council will:

- initiate engagement with the community to gauge attitudes toward any proposed requirement for cats and dogs to be desexed prior to the point of sale or exchange of ownership. Consultation with licensed cat and dog breeders will form part of this engagement process.

4.4 WORK WITH STATE GOVERNMENT

Council will:

- liaise with the State Government to support legislation to eliminate puppy farming.

4.5 UNWANTED ANIMAL RE-HOMING POLICY

Council will:

- continue development of the existing Animal Management - surrendered and Unclaimed Animals Policy,
- promote stories of positive rehoming experiences,
- review outsourcing arrangements for the rehoming of unwanted cats and dogs for clarification in the policy.



ANIMAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE

5 E D U S S I S I S S E S K E Y

On average 120 dogs and 100 cats are impounded each month as a result of a variety of issues from wandering to seizure to surrenders.

The humane treatment, care and disease transmission management at the Animal Management Centre is recognised as a priority.

As the Rockhampton Region grows, the facility needs to continue to expand in line with this growth. Expansion could include funding for further kennels/cattery and a livestock facility.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

5.1 EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY ON COUNCIL'S ANIMAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE

Council will:

- develop promotional material to publicise the facility and it's location and opening times,
- promote the facility as an example of good practice ensuring the care, treatment and welfare of impounded animals meets regulations and community expectations.

5.2 IMPROVE INTERVENTION FOR DISEASE TRANSMISSION MANAGEMENT

Council will:

- continue to monitor the Animal Management Centre to maximise the prevention of disease transmission,
- consult the design with RSPCA QLD and Biosecurity QLD for sign-off on disease control mechanisms,

- test dogs suspected of carrying Parvo Virus and ensure staff implement strict quarantine measures particularly in respect of impounded or surrendered litters,
- promote the importance of keeping pet immunisation against Parvo Virus and other infectious diseases up to date.

5.3 ADEQUATELY RESOURCE THE ANIMAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE

Council will:

- identify capabilities and training required for Animal Management Centre Officers/ Assistants to ensure all required resourcing capabilities are being met.

5.4 STAGE 2 AND 3 ANIMAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Council will:

- continue the future development of the Animal Management Centre to ensure the facility does not exceed capacity and ensuring the welfare and humane treatment of animals,
- investigate State and Federal funding opportunities to support development





ANIMAL NOISE NUISANCE

6 E U S S I S E S I S S U E S K E Y

In 2019 Council received over 770 complaints regarding barking dogs and nearly 120 animal nuisance complaints.

It is natural for dogs to bark, as this is the way that dogs communicate with people and other animals.

Dogs bark for various reasons and small amounts of barking is acceptable. Nuisance barking occurs when a dog barks persistently and disturbs the peace of the neighbourhood regularly and for lengthy periods of time. Nuisance barking occurs for a variety of reasons including boredom, loneliness, anxiety, ongoing neighbourhood disturbances, pain, attention seeking, lack of food or water and/or excitement.

The first the owners may know about their dog's excessive barking in their absence, is a complaint from a neighbour or contact from Council.

The value and importance of neighborhood conversations cannot be underestimated in the resolution of barking nuisances.

Where dog owners show empathy and consideration by altering their day to day routines to attempt to solve the barking, better outcomes are achieved. Otherwise, Council is required to undertake a comprehensive and impartial investigation to gather sufficient evidence to confirm that excessive barking is occurring, and the complaint is not a vexatious one.

This process takes time, during which community frustration about the noise nuisance can result in complaints of Council's perceived lack of a timely response and even altercations between neighbours.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

6.1 COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Council will:

- promote through its website helpful tips and advice about controlling nuisance barking,
- conduct information sessions particularly in neighbourhood areas where complaints of barking are prevalent.

6.2 PROGRESSIVE INTERVENTION

Council will:

- review the current Enforcement Strategy relating to Animal Management to develop a Compliance and Enforcement Procedure which includes guidelines for Local Laws Officers in exercising discretion when handling first offences,
- adopt an operational approach of seeking to encourage compliance from animal owners in the first instance where the matters concerned do not involve risks to public health and safety or blatant or repeated disregard for Council's local laws and relevant legislation,
- continue to invest in technology to monitor barking dogs.



ANIMAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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Animal Management policies and procedures set the framework for officers to follow in conducting their operations in a consistent, reasonable, transparent and effective manner.

Adherence to well established procedures provides officers and Council with direction and the ability to confidently defend allegations of legal or regulatory violations.

The existing instruments include but are not limited to:

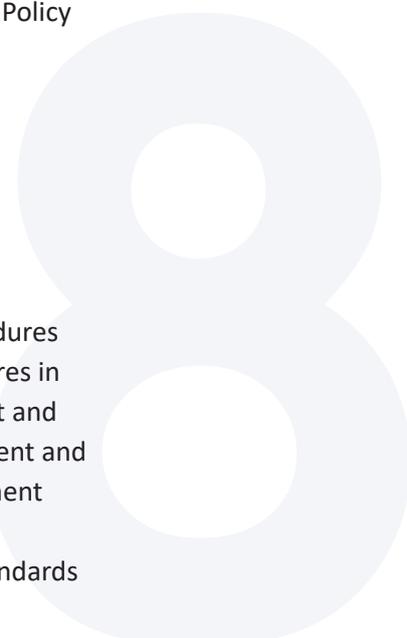
- Animal Management - Desexing Voucher Policy
- Animal Management -Surrendered and Unclaimed Animals Policy
- Animal Management - Impounded Cats and Dogs Registration and Microchipping Policy

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

8.1 REVIEW ANIMAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council will:

- review all existing policies and procedures and create new policies and procedures in response to continuous improvement and emerging trends in animal management and consistent with the Animal Management Strategy,
- continually review agreed service standards that guide response times and cross-organisation interactions,
- review the Schedule of Fees and Charges in response to any policy change,
- identify emerging risks in animal management and create or update Workplace Health & Safety instructions ensuring alliance with the safety first message of Council.





CAPABILITY OF STAFF

KEY ISSUES 10

Council recognises its competent and motivated staff are its greatest asset.

Recruitment and training of staff is key to delivering high quality consistent and transparent customer service in accordance with established legislation, policies, procedures and Councils core values.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES

10.1 REVIEW STAFFING RESOURCES

Council will:

- ensure the provision of appropriately qualified and trained staff,
- ensure the availability of suitable plant and equipment,
- provide ongoing professional development,
- provide high level investigative training.

10.2 STAFF TRAINING

Council will:

- develop a training program that can be delivered to staff to build investigation skills,
- develop a yearly training schedule and deliver to staff to keep training current.



REVIEW AND REPORTING

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

To monitor and measure the effectiveness of the implementation of this strategy, Council will prepare and maintain an Action Delivery Plan incorporating operational requirements aimed at successfully progressing the strategic responses.

The operational actions will be assigned appropriate indicators so performance against the desired outcomes can be regularly assessed. Appropriate reporting frameworks will be put in place to ensure management can monitor performance and adjust operational effort.

CONTINUE RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Continuous research and strategy development will continue to be undertaken through developing business intelligence concerning animal management. This will assist in identifying causes and trends and will ultimately assist in the development of strategic responses and guide operational responses.

STRATEGY REVIEW AND REPORTING

An annual review on the strategic responses of this Strategy will be undertaken to ensure that;

- it aligns to the objectives of Council's corporate and operational plans,
- it identifies and reflects changing priorities, operational capacity and the legislative framework,
- the outcomes are achievable and align with community expectations,
- it has been afforded adequate financial and staffing resources.

An annual update on the performance of this Strategy will be presented to Council in February of each year. Identified and emerging priorities will be highlighted for inclusion in the Action Plan for the following year.





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