

# Animal Management Plan

2018-2023



Adopted 8 January 2019



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2006 a reference group developed an Animal Management Plan for the District Council of Karoonda East Murray as per the requirements of 26A of the Dog and Cat Management Act 2005. This current Animal Management Plan 2018-2023 will continue to guide animal management by the District Council of Karoonda East Murray over the next 5 years.

The Plan's intent is to promote and facilitate responsible ownership of dogs and cats to meet the needs of pets and their owners, while respecting the rights of other members of the community and protecting the environment. This strategy will provide Council with a sound basis and direction from which it can plan, coordinate and make future decisions to meet the needs of the community over the next 5 years.

The vision and objectives of the Plan are focussed on matters that the amended Act seeks to address, matters that are known to make a positive impact on dog behaviour within our community. Our vision for this Plan is to:

- Provide equitable access to public spaces including space for the off-leash exercise of dogs and places where dogs must be on-leash or are dog free; and
- Create a suitable environment for dog ownership that enables the benefits of companion animals to be realised, while minimising nuisance behaviour and its negative impact on our community.

Objectives of the Plan include the promotion of de-sexing, microchipping, registration and the introduction of financial disincentives to deter nuisance dog behaviour.

Objectives of the Plan are:

- Responsible dog exercise in public places.
- To increase the percentage of registered dogs that are microchipped and desexed.
- To encourage responsible dog and cat ownership.
- Reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats.
- Effective administration of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (as amended).

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 sets out our responsibilities for the management of dogs and cats. The Act has recently undergone a range of amendments and the objects of our Plan are consistent with the priorities of the amended Act and are focussed on implementing the new provisions of the Act.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In 2004 the South Australian Parliament enacted a number of amendments to the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (the Act). Among the changes was the requirement for all councils to prepare a Plan of Management relating to dogs and cats within their area.

In 2016 Parliament commenced a regime of legislative amendments to reduce the number of dogs that are euthanized, to incentivise de-sexing and microchipping, and to provide greater powers to Authorised Officers, employed by Council, to enforce the Act.

The Act sets out councils responsibilities for the management of dogs and has undergone a range of amendments which are due to come into effect in two parts on 1 July 2017 and 1 July 2018.

The main changes to the Act include:

- Microchipping – commencing 1 July 2018 all dogs and cats over 3 months of age must be microchipped.
- De-sexing – commencing 1 July 2018 all new generations of dogs and cats must be desexed by 6 months of age.
- Breeders – introducing a requirement for anyone who breeds dogs and cats for sale to register as a breeder.
- Sellers – introducing a requirement for certain information to be provided to the buyer.
- Council powers – councils have greater powers to administer and enforce the Act.
- Penalties and offences – additional expiable offences and fees and penalties increased.
- Assistance dogs – this new definition replaces guide, hearing and disability dogs and accreditation of assistance dogs has been amended.
- New registration fee structure – mandatory rebates for standard dogs (dogs that are both desexed and microchipped) as opposed to non-standard dogs.

A significant change is also the “go live” of Dogs and Cats Online (DACO) on 1 July 2018. From this date, Dogs and Cats Online will be the central database for micro-chipped and registered dogs and cats and registration payments. Dogs and Cats Online will also be the register of breeders. It will allow pet owners to better manage their own details and it will streamline dog and cat management in South Australia, saving councils and ratepayers time and money. More information on and links to DACO can be found online at <http://dogandcatboard.com.au/daco-what-is-it>.

Section 26A of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 creates a statutory obligation on Council to develop a Plan relating to the management of dogs and cats in our area.

The Plan must include provisions for parks where dogs may be exercised off-leash and for parks where dogs must be under effective control by means of physical restraint, and may include provisions for parks where there is a dog free area.

In addition to the mandatory provisions, our Plan outlines our approach to dog and cat management, defines our roles and responsibilities in this field, and sets performance targets, which we can monitor and report on.

### **3. MISSION STATEMENT**

The original mission statement of the Animal Management Plan was:

*“to recognise that animals are part of the community, contributing to its quality of life, and to ensure that the needs of animals and their owners are accommodated while recognising the differing needs of non-animal owners of the community.”*

## 4. STRATEGIES

### Strategy 1

#### **Provide effective management of dogs and cats within the community.**

##### **1.1 Ensure that officers of Council effectively administer the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.**

The strategies to ensure that officers of Council operate within the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act are:

- To ensure that relevant staff have the necessary experience, knowledge and skills to perform the required functions;
- Provide for ongoing training and development of skills; and
- Provide appropriate policy and procedural guidance.

##### **Recommendations**

- 1.1.1 That Council continues to review staff training and development needs as an integral part of annual performance reviews.
- 1.1.2 That Council continues to include animal management training and development needs in their annual training plan.
- 1.1.3 That Council review its current policy and procedures relating to animal management annually.

##### **1.2 Encourage education of dog and cat owners.**

Through annual statistics it is known that registration of dogs and general compliance with the Act is relatively high throughout the community. Council must do everything in its power to ensure that residents and visitors understand their obligations to act as responsible pet owners.

##### **Recommendations**

- 1.2.1 That Council continues to provide information and educational literature through the community newsletter, council offices, and schools and with mail outs of registration renewal reminders.
- 1.2.2 That Council encourages dog obedience training.

##### **1.3 Maximise dog registration.**

Legislation in South Australia requires all dogs of or over 3 months of age must be registered. Councils cannot expect to obtain an acceptable level of dog management without obtaining maximum registration. This can therefore be seen to be an important issue and is the key factor controlling all other effective and successful dog management strategies. Dog registration ensures that:

- Owners are identified as well as their dogs.
- Appropriate funding is available for Councils to carry out responsibilities under the Act.
- Responsible dog owners and the rest of the community do not have to financially support irresponsible and neglectful dog owners.

##### **Recommendations**

- 1.3.1 That Council conducts surveys on dogs not re-registered through various methods.

1.3.2 That Council continues to provide registration renewal reminders on an annual basis.

#### **1.4 Minimise number of dogs wandering at large.**

A dog wandering at large can be a threat to livestock and members of the public, particularly children and older people and Council is aware that serious attacks can arise in these circumstances. Council will therefore implement strategies to minimise its occurrence in the community.

Under the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act it is an offence to allow a dog to wander at large. A dog will be considered wandering at large if it is in a public place, or a private place without the consent of the occupier, and no person is exercising effective control by way of a physical restraint.

The strategies are in two parts; the first to encourage owners to have adequate fencing and control over their dog and the second is the actions of the Council to the dogs wandering at large.

##### **Recommendations**

1.4.1 That owners be made aware of their responsibilities to:

- Adequately fence their property to control their dog;
- Train their dog so as not to leave their premises;
- Keep their dog under effective control when in a public place.

1.4.2 That Council's Authorised Person/Officer conducts random patrols of public areas and detain dogs wandering at large.

1.4.3 That Council respond to calls from the general public of a dog wandering at large. The priority of the Council will be to return the dog to the owner except where the dog is found to be repeatedly wandering.

- Unidentified dogs and repeat offenders will be impounded in accordance with the Act.
- Unclaimed dogs that are suitable as pets will be eligible for distribution to persons seeking a pet, (subject to Council approval). Dogs being re-homed under this program will be required to be registered.
- Unclaimed dogs, which are unsuitable as pets, will be euthanised.

1.4.4 To encourage compliance, the Council's Authorised Person/Officer will give warnings to first offences that are of a minor nature where no harm to a person or property has occurred. Penalties prescribed by the Act will be applied for re-offenders.

#### **1.5 Enforce identification of dogs and encourage identification of cats.**

Identification of dogs is imperative to provide sound animal management practices. Residents and visitors to the area must identify their dogs at all times. Generally speaking pet owners within the Council area do not allow their pets to wander at large.

Accidental escape accounts for approximately 90% of dogs wandering at large. Often these dogs are not identified and therefore cannot be returned to the owner. The costs associated with impounding unidentified dogs and cats and the stress this places on the animals and their owners can be avoided.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.5.1 That Council educate the public regarding the correct identification of dogs and cats, and promote DACO.
- 1.5.2 That Council promote DACO and the mandatory microchipping of dogs and cats through its newsletters and social media.
- 1.5.3 That Council staff encourage cat owners through education of the need to identify their cats so that in the event that it is trapped, the cat can be identified and returned to its owner. Unidentified cats are at risk of being destroyed.

### **1.6 Encourage the community to report all dog attacks and harassments to Council.**

Knowledge is the Council's best tool to reduce the number of dog attacks that occur in the community. The collection of data will enable Council to understand the situations that lead to such attacks and therefore the community must be encouraged to provide information regarding all attacks regardless of their severity.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.6.1 That Council continues to promote the reporting of all dog attacks and harassment by dogs on humans and livestock throughout the community.
- 1.6.2 That Council provides for the formal reporting, in person or via telephone, and follow up, of dog attacks and harassment by dogs, through use of its complaint forms.

### **1.7 Provide suitable on-leash, off-leash and dog free areas.**

Providing suitable on and off-leash activity areas is beneficial to the success of animal management. Dog owners need suitable areas to exercise their dogs safely.

Equally, other members of the community must have the ability to use the amenities without fear of harassment by uncontrolled dogs. In areas such as streets, roads, and places the public congregate such as shopping areas, dogs must be restrained effectively.

Dogs must be restrained effectively in all public places. 'Public place' means a place which the public has access (whether an admission fee is charged or not) and includes streets, roads, footpaths, shopping centre car parks, ovals and sporting arenas.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.7.1 That Council continues to allow off-leash exercise of dogs at Apex Park located on Karoonda Highway, Karoonda.
- 1.7.2 That it be a requirement that all dogs in public areas e.g. road and footpaths, are required to be on a lead. In any other Council reserve besides the above mentioned off-leash areas, dogs must be on a lead also.
- 1.7.3 That Council has declared dog free areas to be the two children's playgrounds at 19 Railway Terrace and Lot 201 Stokes Road, Karoonda and the Karoonda town oval.

### **1.8 Maximise the public's understanding of the Council's Authorised Person/Officer and the Council's role in the community.**

The role performed by animal management officers and Council is not always fully understood by the general community. Ongoing communication and education can assist in this regard, to avoid possible misunderstanding of animal management initiatives.

## **Recommendation**

1.8.1 That Council continue to regularly inform the public of their role and current animal management issues.

### **1.9 Maintain data collection to better understand dog and cat management issues.**

Council must have accurate information in order to fully understand animal management issues. All complaints, and follow up details, are therefore recorded via the complaint form. Actions initiated by staff are recorded on formal incident report sheets all of which are retained, together with correspondence and other records, in a dedicated file in Council's records management system.

Dogs and Cats Online will be the central database for micro-chipped and registered dogs and cats and registration payments. Dogs and Cats Online will also be the register of breeders. It will allow pet owners to better manage their own details and it will streamline dog and cat management in South Australia.

## **Recommendation**

1.9.1 That Council continues to maintain accurate data and conduct annual analysis of complaints/actions to identify, report on, and respond to, any trends regarding animal management issues.

## **Strategy 2**

### **Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership.**

#### **2.1 Provide education material to residents and visitors to the Council area.**

There are three factors that contribute to successful pet ownership. They are:

- The *Owner*, who needs to be aware of responsibilities of pet ownership, ensures that the dog is registered, immunised, microchipped and desexed. The owner is also responsible to ensure that the dog is trained, and to be aware of the dogs behaviour at all times. The owner is also responsible to ensure that the dog has adequate food, water and shelter and that the dog is regularly exercised.
- The *Breed* determines the size, and often the temperament of the dog and its susceptibility to genetic defects. When selecting a pet it is important to seek appropriate advice on the soundness of animals being considered and their suitability to the home/yard that the dog will be kept in and the family that the dog will be joining, particularly if small children are involved.
- The *Home environment* is made up of the part of the home that the dog will have access to.

In most cases this will include an enclosed yard and possibly part of the house. Important factors are the adequacy of the fencing, whether the dog can see out of the yard through a gate, adequacy of shelter, food/water, whether there are children, closeness of neighbours and other dogs, and access to on-leash and off-leash exercise areas.

Successful pet ownership has both financial and time commitments and it is therefore important that people contemplating pet ownership endeavour to match their choice of pet for their particular home and family circumstances.

There are also new laws regulating the breeding and sale of dogs and cats. The most important changes to the law are:

- Breeders and sellers must adhere to the new South Australian Standards and Guidelines for Breeding and Trading Companion Animals from 1 August 2017.
- If you are a breeder and seller, you must register as a breeder with the Dog and Cat Management Board.
- You must not sell a dog or cat unless it has been desexed (by 6 months of age) and microchipped (by 12 weeks of age) in accordance with the Act.
- Any advertisements you place for the sale of a dog or a cat must include your contact details and breeder registration number and provide the buyer with specific information.

### **Recommendations**

- 2.1.1 Provide advice that online information regarding breeds and assistance in pet selection is available at the Dog and Cat Management Board of SA ([www.dogandcatboard.com.au](http://www.dogandcatboard.com.au)).
- 2.1.2 That people contemplating obtaining a dog or a cat be encouraged to become familiar with the responsibilities of dog or cat ownership prior to obtaining a dog or a cat.
- 2.1.3 That people who obtain a new dog are encouraged to have it trained.

## **2.2 Enforce the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act.**

Consistent enforcement of the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act is an important factor in educating the public to act responsibly with their pets.

Responsible pet owners expect irresponsible pet owners to be dealt with through the provisions of the Act. Effectively there cannot be an incentive to act responsibly with our pets unless there is a disincentive for those who are not responsible.

### **Recommendation**

- 2.2.1 That the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act be consistently enforced in accordance with Council policy.

## **Strategy 3**

### **Ensure public safety and amenity in relation to the activities of dogs and cats.**

#### **3.1 Reduce the following detrimental impacts of dogs and cats.**

##### **Barking dogs**

Barking dog complaints are one of the most difficult and time consuming areas of Council responsibility and are subjective, depending on an individual's tolerance for dog noise. However, Council must investigate and resolve this type of complaint.

In order for Council to resolve the complaint they require full co-operation from the complainant to collect meaningful evidence suitable to a Court of law, if the complaint cannot be readily resolved with the owner of the dog(s). On receipt of a complaint Council will provide information to the dog owner and, if the problem continues, diaries to the complainant. If and when the diaries are returned, and the complaint substantiated, Council will take the appropriate course of action.

### **Recommendations**

- 3.1.1 That Council continues to follow the above procedure for the investigation of noise nuisance complaints.

- 3.1.2 That Council will provide educational material to dog owners to assist in changing barking behaviour in the event of a complaint regarding dog noise nuisances.

### **Dog attacks/harassment**

As previously stated all dog attacks/harassment must be recorded and investigated. In order to reduce the incidence of dog attacks Council must educate the public to act responsibly. The issue of dog attacks and harassment is of great concern to the general community, particularly in relation to children and the elderly.

While a minority of dogs are involved in attacks and harassment, all dogs have the potential to bite, regardless of size, age, breed or temperament, particularly in situations where they are frightened, dominant, protective or possessive. How to avoid being bitten or how to read a dog's body language are important issues on which to educate the public.

### **Recommendations**

- 3.1.3 That Council collates statistics related to dog attacks to determine any trends applicable.
- 3.1.4 That Council provides the opportunity to people who have been attacked/harassed, or whose stock has been attacked/harassed, to report the incident.
- 3.1.5 That Council maintains a history of dogs that have attacked/harassed and makes appropriate Orders where considered necessary.

### **Dog faeces in public places.**

The management of dog faeces is an important environmental and health issue and is an issue on which the community has strong feelings. Ongoing education on responsible dog ownership including the need to prevent dogs fouling public places and private property is required.

### **Recommendation**

- 3.1.6 That Council continues to educate the public on all aspects of responsible dog ownership throughout each year.

### **Nuisance caused by cats.**

Under the provision of the Dog and Cat Management Act an unowned cat can be trapped when found wandering on private property. If an occupier traps a cat and it is identifiable the cat must be released unless the cat is more than one kilometre from a genuine place of residence. Under the provisions of the Act a cat must be identified by way of a collar with ownership details or by way of a microchip. From 1 July 2018 all cats over 12 weeks of age should be microchipped.

### **Recommendation**

- 3.1.7 That Council continues to provide cat traps to residents experiencing problems with cats.

## Strategy 4

### **Provide for the welfare and safety of impounded dogs and cats.**

#### **4.1 Ensure that impounded dogs are returned to owners as soon as practical.**

Council quickly follows the procedures laid down in the Act when identified and unidentified dogs are impounded, to provide the owner with the opportunity to have the dog released from the pound as soon as possible.

##### **Recommendation**

4.1.1 That Council continues to diligently attempt to contact dog owners as quickly as possible after a dog is impounded.

#### **4.2 Ensure that all impounded dogs and cats have clean safe facilities while impounded.**

Council maintains and operates its dog holding facilities in accordance with the Guideline for the keeping of Dogs and Cats under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 - Management and Welfare as set down by the Dog and Cat Management Board.

##### **Recommendation**

4.2.1 That Council continue the above practice and conducts an annual review of its pounds for compliance.

## Strategy 5

### **Ensure the expenditure of registration fees is directed to dog and cat animal management issues.**

#### **5.1 Conduct annual reviews of income and expenditure to ensure that Council is using best practice with available funds.**

Under the provisions of the Act Council must utilise money generated from dog registrations in the area of dog and cat management. The implementation of this plan is a clear demonstration of Council's desire to fulfil this obligation.

Council maintains appropriate records of income and expenditure in this area and provides a budget to the Dog & Cat Management Board each year.

##### **Recommendation**

5.1.1 That Council continues to review dog management expenditure needs, from dog registration income, as part of its annual budget development processes.



## 5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Objective	Goals	Actions	KPI's
<p>Provide effective management of dogs and cats within the community.</p>	<p>Ensure that Officers of Council operate within the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.</p> <p>Ensure that Officers operate within predetermined guidelines in accordance with the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.</p> <p>Encourage education of dog and cat owners.</p> <p>Maximise dog registration.</p> <p>Minimise dogs wandering at large.</p> <p>Enforce identification of dogs through microchipping days.</p> <p>Provide suitable on and off-leash activity areas.</p> <p>Maximise the public's understanding of the Council's Authorised Person/Officer and the Council's role in the community.</p> <p>Introduce data collection to better understand dog and cat management issues.</p>	<p>Management conduct staff reviews annually.</p> <p>Regular audits of the Animal Management Plan annually.</p> <p>Compare registration compliance with previous years.</p> <p>Collect data regarding dogs impounded by Council without current registration.</p> <p>Compare dog attack/harassment reports with previous years.</p> <p>Undertaking door knocks for compliance.</p>	<p>Increase to registration figures.</p> <p>Reduction in the amount of overdue notices issued.</p> <p>Reduction in the amount of dogs impounded by Council that are not registered.</p> <p>Reduce dog attacks/harassment.</p>
<p>Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership.</p>	<p>Provide education material to residents and visitors to the Council area.</p> <p>Enforce the provisions of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.</p>	<p>Collate information regarding education material distributed to residents and visitors.</p> <p>Collect data of expiations issued compared with previous years.</p>	<p>Increase in advertising and education.</p>

Ensure public safety through the reduction of public and environmental nuisances caused by dogs and cats.	Reduce the following detrimental impacts of dogs and cats; - Barking dogs; - Dog attacks/harassment; - Dog faeces in public places; - Nuisance caused by cats.	Data collection and analysis.	Reduction in the amount of complaints received by Council.
Provide for the welfare and safety of impounded dogs and cats.	Ensure that impounded dogs are returned to owners as soon as practical.  Ensure that all impounded dogs and cats have clean, safe facilities while impounded.  Ensure that off-leash areas are suitable for dogs to be exercised.  Off-leash areas are sign posted.	Data collection and analysis of expiations issued compare with previous years.  Review pound procedures annually.  Conduct risk analysis of off-leash areas annually.	100% of dogs are returned to their owners.
Ensure the expenditure of registrations fees is directed to dog and cat management issues.	Conduct regular reviews of income and expenditure to ensure that Council is using best practice with available funds.	Audit conducted by the Dog and Cat Management Board if required.	100% compliance at Dog and Cat Management Board audit.

## 6. INTERNAL REVIEWS

A person who is dissatisfied with a decision which has been taken by the Council, a Council employee, or a person acting on behalf of the Council, should refer to Council's Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy (Grievance Policy) for assistance and advice.

## 7. REVIEW OF THE ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis and in accordance with Section 26a of the Dog & Cat Management Act 1995 as amended. A Council must produce a plan for every five-year term.