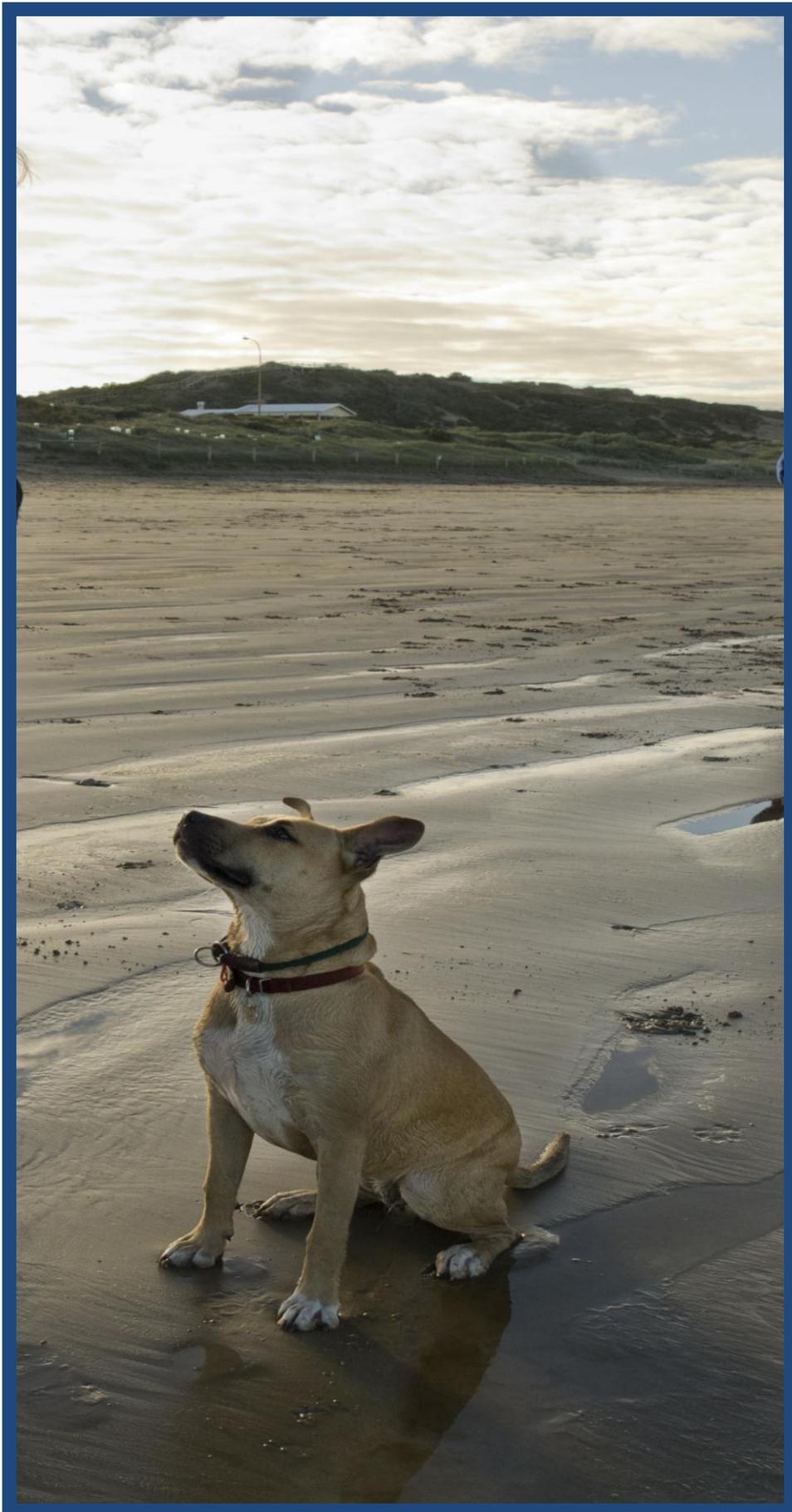


Alexandrina Council

Animal Management Plan

2013 -2017





Executive Summary

The Alexandrina Council is situated approximately 70 Kilometres from the Adelaide CBD and has a population base of 24 000 people and around 6500 registered dogs.

The Animal Management Plan has been prepared by the Alexandrina Council (the Council) as required by the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 and will guide domestic animal management by the Council over the next five years.

Alexandrina Council's mission is to provide visionary leadership and serve the local and wider community equitably with efficient and effective services in order to achieve our community's present and future needs.

The Plan's Mission is to promote and facilitate responsible ownership of dogs and cats, animal welfare and the benefits of animal companionship focusing on the legitimate needs of pets and their owners while respecting the rights of other members of the community and protecting the environment.

Overview

The Dog and Cat Management Act was enacted in 1995 and brought in a new legal framework to South Australia covering both dogs and cats. The objectives of the Act are to:

- Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership
- Reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats, and
- To promote the effective management of dogs and cats (including through the encouragement of de-sexing of dogs and cats)

Animal control has widened into a greater array of contexts following the introduction of the Act. Knowledge of both animal and human behaviour is now a requirement of working in the field.

There is growing recognition that enforcement of laws will not, on its own, result in lasting, voluntary changes in behaviour. It needs to be supplemented by a range of non-regulatory approaches such as public education and improved signage.

There is now considerable evidence to support our understanding of the benefits of owning pets. This implies a potentially new role for Council in harnessing the benefits of pet ownership or at least maintaining the ability of the community to continue to own dogs and cats. In this new environment, it is essential that Council take a strategic approach to managing domestic pets. This strategy will provide Council with a sound basis and direction from which it can plan, co-ordinate and make future decisions to meet the needs of the community over the next five years.

Aims

The plan aims to:

- Provide effective management and a suitable environment for dogs and cats within the community.
- Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership
- Increase public safety through the reduction of public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats.
- Provide for the welfare and safety of dogs and cats.
- Acknowledge the importance of dogs and cats in society.
- Encourage the enjoyment of and benefits from dogs and cats by people.
- Encourage public safety and amenity in relation to dogs and cats.
- Protect native fauna and flora from the impact of dogs and cats.
- Ensure the expenditure of registration fees addresses the needs of pet owners as well as domestic animal management issues.

Alexandrina Council has developed a wide range of objectives and actions to be undertaken by Council, for domestic animal management and relates these back to the wider policy context. These objectives and actions will enable Council to maintain a balance between competing interests and to reposition domestic animal management to accommodate new requirements.

The plan has been prepared by the Compliance Team on behalf of Council, drawing information from a broad range of stakeholders with the inclusion of community consultation prior to adoption by Council.

The Animal Management Plan links with Alexandrina Council's Strategic Management Plans

Up until 30 June 2013

1.7.3 of Council's Community Strategic Plan requires officers to provide and promote effective management of animals within the community.

From 1 July 2013 onwards

The 'Alexandrina: Connecting Communities' Strategic Management Plan has the following linkages to this Animal Management Plan:

Activate our Spaces – Memorable Experiences – Create welcoming, accessible public spaces around natural and built environments.

Participate in Wellbeing – Accessible Services and Opportunities – Protect public health and promote linkages to the wellbeing of the broader community

The Law and Guidelines

The responsibilities for dog and cat management in South Australia are prescribed in the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995. Under the Act Councils are required to administer and enforce the provisions relating to dogs within its area. Prescribed responsibilities include the appointment of a Registrar, maintenance of a Dog Register, the appointment of a Dog Management Officer and to make arrangements for dogs seized, and its other obligations under the Act. A Council is also able to make by-laws relating to the management of dogs and cats within its area.

The Act also provides for the appointment of the Dog and Cat Management Board, which has responsibilities to plan, promote, and advise on the effective management of dogs and cats in the State, to monitor Council's management of their responsibilities, to issue Guidelines for Councils and to advise and assist Councils to undertake their responsibilities. The Board also has a role to provide advice to the Minister, to keep the Act under review, to undertake research into companion animal management and to provide education programs for dog management officers and community awareness information.

The Act also provides that a Council may appoint a Cat Management Officer for its area of responsibility.

While these provisions provide the legal framework for the Council's responsibilities and the penalties that can be imposed on dog owners for non compliance, this Plan seeks to implement a balanced approach that caters to everyone's needs that will not only benefit dogs and their owners as a group with legitimate needs, but also the wider community as well as those charged with the responsibility of animal management by-laws.

Dog off-leash times and areas

By-law No. 5 allows that:

A person may enter a public place or part of Local Government land to which the Council has determined this subclause applies, for the purpose of exercising a dog under his or her effective control.

A person entering a dog exercise area designated by the Council must ensure that any dog under that person's control, charge or authority is under effective control at all times

but also states that:

A person must not, without the Council's permission, allow a dog under that person's control, charge or authority to be or remain on Local Government Land or public place to which Council has determined that this subclause applies or on any park or reserve during times when organised sport is being played.

By resolution of Council, dogs are permitted to be off leash between the hours of 6pm and 10am daily, on beaches and all Council reserves. Whilst off leash dogs must be under effective control by a responsible person. In all other public areas dogs must be on a secure leash of not more than 2 meters. There are not currently any permanent dog off-leash parks within the area, however, this is likely to be reviewed following the consultation period for this Animal Management Plan.

Objectives

Objective 1 - Promote responsible dog and cat ownership

Actions:

1. Undertake duties that will maximise the number of registered dogs in our district.
2. Promote the identification, micro-chipping and de-sexing of dogs and cats.
3. Offer community incentives to promote responsible ownership of animals.
4. Ensure access is available to educational materials for animal owners.
5. Provide infrastructure that supports responsible dog and cat ownership, i.e. dog dispenser's, dog off-leash areas and signage

Key Performance Indicators:

- Increase each year in the number of dogs registered
- Consistent number of puppy registrations each year

In five years, trend data demonstrates:

- Reduction in number of dogs impounded
- Increase in the percentage of dogs that are de-sexed and microchipped

Objective 2 - Reduce the negative impact of dogs and cats on public safety, amenity and the environment

Actions:

- 1 Provide a suitable environment for dogs within our community.
- 2 Encourage the community to report domestic animal incidents to Council.
- 3 Provide community education to discourage semi-ownership of cats.
- 4 Undertake activities to reduce the feral cat population within our community.
- 5 Clearly define areas unsuitable for dog recreation and exercise including for the purpose of protection of native fauna and flora.
- 6 Support the provision of suitable dog off leash activity areas.
- 7 Encourage and enforce responsible dog management under the provisions of the Dog & Cat Management Act 1995.

Key Performance Indicators:

In three years trend data demonstrates:

- Decrease in the Number of feral cat complaints received

In five years trend data demonstrates:

- Decrease in the Number of dog attacks reported to Council
- Decrease in the Number of Orders issued under the Dog & Cat Management Act
- Decrease in the Number of expiations issued for breaches of the Dog & Cat Management Act.

- Decrease in the Number of dogs reported to be wandering at large

Objective 3 - Harness the positive benefits of dog and cat ownership

Actions:

- 1 Recognise the social importance of dogs and cats in society.
- 2 Assist in the education of dog and cat owners.
- 3 Provide information to assist the community regarding the welfare and safety of dogs and cats.
- 4 Provide education to the community about the positive benefits of dog and cat ownership and safety around dogs.
- 5 Encourage the responsible re-homing or surrender of unclaimed or unwanted dogs and cats.

Key Performance Indicators:

- Increase in the number of dogs returned to their owners
- Increase in the amount of targeted community education

Objective 4 - Operate an efficient and effective Animal management Service

Actions:

- 1 Ensure that Officers of Council operate, administer and enforce provisions of relevant policies and legislation.
- 2 Develop, implement and monitor Standard Operating Procedures.
- 3 Ensure consistency through standardised training of Compliance Officers.
- 4 Ensure the expenditure of registration fees addresses the needs of dog owners as well as domestic animal management issues.
- 5 Ensure the public understands the role of Compliance Officers in our community.
- 6 Adopt and adhere to an enforcement policy that reflects the enforcement needs of Council.
- 7 Improve data collection to enhance operational efficiency.
- 8 Conduct regular reviews of income and expenditure to ensure that Council is using best practice with available funds in the area of animal management.
- 9 Maintain positive relationships with other relevant animal management agencies.
- 10 Maintain a contract for dog and cat holding facilities that upholds the standards set by the Dog and Cat Management Board
- 11 Ensure all steps are taken to provide for the safety and welfare of dogs and cats whilst in the care and control of Council
- 12 Ensure that Council's by-laws in relation to dogs and cats reflect the needs of the community

Key Performance Indicators:

- Refresher training received by Officers as per schedule
- SOPs adopted and reviewed in accordance with review schedule
- Income from dog registrations used for Dog Management Activities

- Animal management component of Council budget reviewed annually
- Contract maintained for dog and cat holding facilities
- Review of By-laws compliant with the Local Government Act 1999