



**SINGLETON**  
COUNCIL

# Companion Animal Management Plan 2018

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# Introduction

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## Companion Animals Act 1998

Introduced by the NSW Government in 1998, *The Companion Animals Act 1998* (The Act) and the *Companion Animals Regulation 2008* are to provide for the effective and responsible care and management of companion animals.

The Act indicates that “companion animal” means a dog, a cat or any other animal that is prescribed by the regulations as a companion animal.

All dogs are treated under The Act as a companion animal despite the fact that they may not be a pet. Working farm dogs, guard dogs, police dogs and corrective services dogs are examples of this.

The Act sets down controls in relation to the following types of matters:

- The registration and identification requirements for dogs and cats;
- The need for dogs in a public place to be on a leash and under effective control at all times. Designated off-leash areas are excluded;
- The circumstances that a dog or cat may be declared a nuisance;
- The definition of what constitutes a dog attack;
- The areas in which dogs and cats are prohibited;
- The reason a cat may be lawfully seized; and
- Procedures for dealing with seized or surrendered animals.

## The Singleton Local Government Area

Singleton Council is situated in the centre of the Hunter Valley of NSW and contains the town of Singleton and the villages of Broke, Bulga, Camberwell and Jerry’s Plains as well as a number of rural communities. The Local Government Area (LGA) has a diverse range of industry which includes agriculture, viticulture, power generation, coal mining and associated support industries as well as the School of Infantry at the Singleton Army Barracks.

There are as of March 2018 14,293 dogs and 2989 cats registered in the LGA, and in the 2016 / 2017 financial year a total of 80 dogs and 3 cats were seized and/or processed through the Pound by Council.

In terms of dog ownership, 62% of Australian households own a dog with around 29% owning cats (Australian Veterinary Association). Given that there are approximately 9,329 households in the Singleton LGA, a significant proportion of our community has a direct involvement in companion animal issues through pet ownership with the balance of the community being exposed to the impacts of pet ownership in one way or another.

## **What is the Companion Animal Management Plan (CAMP)?**

The Act requires local government to be responsible for a substantial range of issues regarding companion animals. Beyond the requirements of the Act, Councils must also determine to what extent they intend to exercise their powers and how they might wish to use non-regulatory techniques to influence companion animal related activities.

Council's current CAMP was developed in 2011 and adopted by Council in March 2013. In 2017, Council's Operational Plan included a requirement to undertake a review of the existing CAMP.

The Draft Singleton CAMP 2018, as contained in this document, details the manner in which Singleton Council intends to deal with companion animal related matters for the next four (4) years.

Council uses a range of education and enforcement tools to achieve compliance with the Act. Council's Companion Animal Management Plan identifies key issues in companion animal management and develops and prioritises actions to address these issues.

The Plan identifies three (3) primary themes in companion animal management – animals, community and environment. Specific actions that provide measurable indicators have been chosen to assess plan outcomes.

The Plan aims to:

- balance the needs of the community, the environment and companion animals;
- identify gaps in current planning;
- provide a framework for prioritising actions; and
- provide measurable indicators for the assessment of plan outcomes.

## Policy Statement for Companion Animals Management

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- Recognising the importance of companion animal management to the community, environment and the companion animals of Singleton;
- Using a range of skills and tools in education and enforcement;
- Encourage all pet owners in the Singleton LGA to be responsible for their pet's behaviour.

The following principles of responsible pet ownership will be employed:

1. Appropriate pet selection;
2. Basic animal welfare;
3. Identification;
4. Registration;
5. Desexing;
6. Secure confinement;
7. Environmental harmony;
8. Socialisation;
9. Training; and
10. Lifetime commitment.

Our **objectives** in companion animal management are:

- To encourage and enforce the permanent microchip identification and lifetime registration of all companion animals and working dogs in Singleton to facilitate the prompt return of companion animals to their owners.
- To provide a fast and efficient service for customers updating or registering details on the NSW Companion Animal Register.
- To facilitate the prompt return to owner of seized animals and therefore reduce the number of animals that need to be impounded.
- To provide a best practice animal care facility and transport for impounded animals.
- To minimise the numbers of unwanted animals that are euthanased.
- To ensure Council staff regard animal welfare as a high priority in all dealings with the community and their companion animals.
- To encourage companion animal owners to provide appropriate mental and physical challenges for their companion animal that improve animal welfare and reduce adverse impact on the general community.
- To improve community awareness of the importance of safety around companion animals in a move to minimise the occurrence of dog attacks.

- To improve owner's awareness of their responsibility to maintain their animal under effective control in public places.
- To ensure an efficient and effective response to reported dog attacks.
- To provide off leash exercise areas for dogs across the LGA that are as safe as possible for dogs and people.
- To encourage and promote desexing of non-breeding stock.
- To ensure Council staff are well trained and are dynamic in their learning and updating of skills in relation to their functions.
- To minimise noise caused by companion animals and improve community amenity.
- To minimise the impact of companion animals and their faeces on water catchments.
- To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on biodiversity.

## Responsible Pet Ownership

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Education and promotion of responsible pet ownership is the guiding principle behind the Plan. Many of the issues identified in companion animal management can be related to irresponsible pet ownership, and by encouraging more responsible behaviour by dog owners, many of the Plan objectives can be met.

Council aims to encourage all pet owners in the LGA to be responsible for their pet's actions through education and enforcement.

Responsible pet ownership includes appropriate pet selection, basic health and welfare principles, identification, registration, desexing, secure confinement, environmental enrichment, socialisation, training and lifetime commitment.

Appropriate pet selection is the first stage to responsible pet ownership. Pets received as gifts and cheap pets are more often surrendered to welfare organisations (Stabler 1999).

By choosing an animal most suited to the owner's lifestyle and property constraints, nuisance behaviour can be minimised. Choosing the right animal ensures a lifetime commitment to the animal. The average lifespan of an Australian companion animal dog is 10-12 years of age (Canine Journal) and the average lifespan for an Australian companion animal cat is 12-15 years of age (Pet Care RX). This is due in part to the high euthanasia rate of young companion animals for behaviour problems, medical issues and lack of ownership commitment for the lifetime of the animal.

The privilege of owning and enjoying the companionship of a pet carries with it the dual responsibilities of care for the animal, and respect for the community and the environment.

Responsible pet owners:

- When at home, confine their animal in their yard to prevent impacts on public safety and the environment;
- When in public places, ensure that their pet is under effective control by means of a leash (except in leash free areas);
- Keep their pets out of prohibited areas;
- Make sure their animal is identified with a microchip, collar and tag to assist in returning the animal if it becomes lost;
- Register their animal on the State register;
- Desex their animal to minimise nuisance behaviour, minimise numbers of unwanted animals and have a cleaner, healthier, happier animal; and
- Clean up after their animal.

Council staff emphasise the importance of responsible pet ownership when dealing with animal owners, and many of the Plan actions involve education on aspects of responsible pet ownership to deliver on the Plan objectives.



## Mission Statement

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Enhanced quality of life for all Singleton Local Government Area residents through appropriate community education and promotion of responsible pet ownership to improve community amenity, welfare of animals, and the natural environment.



## Animal Issues

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### Identification and Registration

An integral part of the Act is the permanent microchip identification, statewide lifetime registration and web-based NSW Companion Animal Register.

Animal welfare issues such as environmental enrichment for confined animals, and the safe transport and impounding of companion animals are also important.

### Objective

- To encourage the permanent microchip identification of all companion animals in Singleton to facilitate the prompt return of lost or stray companion animals to their owners.
- To encourage and enforce the statewide lifetime registration of all companion animals in Singleton in accordance with the Act.
- To provide a fast and efficient service for customers updating or registering details on the NSW Companion Animal Register.

### Background

The Companion Animals Act requires that companion animals be microchipped by 12 weeks of age, and be registered by 6 months of age. The microchip and registration process allows lost or straying companion animals to be identified and returned to their owners as quickly as possible, generally avoiding the need for the animals to be impounded. Eighty per cent (80%) of the revenue received from companion animal registrations is provided to Council, which supports Councils programs in companion animal management.

Microchipping must be carried out by authorised identifiers such as veterinarians, breeders and animal welfare staff. Council officers are authorised identifiers, enabling Council to microchip impounded animals prior to their release.

There are now as of March 2018 approximately 7,806 animal's microchipped in the LGA. Of those animals (57%) are lifetime registered. An unknown number of cats and dogs are likely to be neither microchipped or registered, and Council uses education and enforcement strategies to address this issue when these animals are located.

Council aims to hold free microchipping days around the LGA for local residents to promote responsible pet ownership as well as to accurately capture statistics of the number of companion animals within the LGA.

### Issues

- Not all authorised identifiers send in identification forms within the statutory time limit.
- There is still community confusion over the two step process in the legislation i.e. identification then registration.
- There are still a large number of companion animals that are identified but not registered.

- The total number of dogs and cats that are not microchipped and registered is unknown.
- Not all companion animal owners update their change of address details on the register.

### Actions

1. Provide educational materials to local companion animal service industries to promote identification and registration of companion animals.
2. Hold regular “Registration Roundups” and other events to facilitate identification, registration and responsible pet ownership.
3. Provide information for display within veterinary surgeries which reminds companion animal owners to notify of changes to ownership, address and other details.
4. Follow up companion animal owners who have their animal microchipped but not registered.



## Impounding Animals

### Objective

- To facilitate the prompt return to owner of seized animals and therefore reduce the number of animals that need to be impounded.
- To provide a best practice animal care facility and transport for impounded animals.
- To minimise the numbers of unwanted animals that are euthanased.
- To improve rehoming percentages for cats and dogs from the 2016/2017 statistics.
- To continue to build a rapport with rescue agencies.
- Improve the pound facility with new development.

### Background

Council responds to complaints and proactively patrols for dogs straying in public places. When the animal is seized by a Council officer it is returned to the owner or impounded.

Council aims to return as many animals to their owner as possible, however animals must be impounded when an owner cannot be identified or contacted. When animals are impounded, they are held for up to 14 days and are then either sent to a rehoming organisation or euthanased. Animals are euthanased only when they are unclaimed and determined to be unsuitable for rescue or if illness or behavioural problems are identified.

### Issues

- There are difficulties in returning companion animals to their owners as they are often not contactable, not home or have changed address or changed owners.
- Whenever animals are impounded, disease transmission and other animal welfare factors such as stress are of concern.
- Owners are liable to significant costs in impound and sustenance fees when animals have remained in the pound for extended periods.
- Animals are only euthanased when they are unclaimed and determined to be unsuitable for rescue or if either illness or behavioural problems are identified.

### Actions

1. Ensure that companion animal transport and impound protocols follow best practice guidelines provided by NSW Agriculture.
2. Continue the placement of digital photos of unidentified stray animals on Council's social media account to facilitate the release of animals from the pound and reduce rates of euthanasia.
3. Encourage authorised identifiers and animal owners to record as much owner contact information as possible to facilitate their prompt return to owner.
4. Actively seek rescue agencies and note what each is specifically looking for.
5. Provide education to the public on the importance of accurate register contact details.

## Animal Welfare

### Objective

- To ensure Council staff regard animal welfare as a high priority in all dealings with the community and their companion animals.
- To encourage companion animal owners to provide appropriate mental and physical challenges for their companion animal that improve animal welfare and reduce adverse impact on the general community.

### Background

Animal welfare is defined as providing appropriate nutrition, shelter, exercise, and interaction to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of an animal. Animal welfare is intricately linked to the welfare of their owners.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is the lead agency in managing animal welfare in NSW. Given that Council is actively involved in other aspects of companion animal management, it is appropriate that Council cooperate with the RSPCA to ensure that animal welfare issues are appropriately addressed. In many cases, animal welfare issues give rise to nuisance behaviours such as barking or straying and therefore Council has a supplementary role in the issue.

Many urban pet problems arise from animals experiencing frustration or boredom causing reactions such as barking, chasing, and jumping up. By providing environmental enrichment such as the addition of cognitive, dietary, physical, sensory and social stimuli, the animal's physiological and psychological well being can be improved.

Desexing companion animals has been encouraged through the registration fee structure incorporated into the Companion Animals Act 1998. Early desexing reduces potential pet behaviour problems such as roaming, mounting, and urine spraying in companion animals.

### Issues

- Large numbers of animals kept in confined spaces can cause animal welfare concerns, in addition to causing nuisance behaviour.
- Currently there is no restriction on numbers of companion animals permitted on premises.
- Undesexed animals are at greater risk of straying and contribute to the numbers of unwanted pets. There are also claims that undesexed animals are not as clean, quiet and healthy as desexed animals.

### Actions

1. Continue to promote the benefits of desexing of companion animals.
2. Provide information to the community on appropriate animal housing and care as recommended by the RSPCA.
3. Review Council's Animal Boarding Establishment Policy including guidelines on numbers of dogs and cats recommended to be kept per premises.

## Community Issues

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Companion animals play an important role in Australian society and culture. Many in the Singleton community assimilate companion animals into their everyday life while others prefer not to associate with animals. Balance and harmony between these groups is difficult to achieve but is based on respect and responsibility.

As of March 2018 there are currently 201 microchipped and registered working dogs in the Singleton LGA. The Companion Animals Act 1998 defines a working dog as a dog used primarily for the purpose of droving, tending, working or protecting stock, and includes a dog being trained as a working dog. Owners of dogs can apply through Council to have their dog identified on the Companion Animal Register as a working dog and must meet criteria to have their dog recognised as a working dog.

### Public Safety

#### Objective

- To improve community awareness of the importance of safety around companion animals.
- To improve owner's awareness of their responsibility to maintain their animal under effective control in public places.
- To ensure an efficient and effective response to reported dog attacks.
- To keep up to date records of restricted and dangerous dogs.
- Conduct proactive patrols of the LGA and issue cautions/fine for breaches of the Companion Animals Act 1998.
- To ensure all restricted and dangerous dogs comply with the Companion Animal Act 1998 requirements.
- To reduce the number of dogs being owned in the restricted breeds category.

#### Background

Dog attacks compromise public safety and affect the right of the community to be safe in a public place and on private property.

Children are a high risk group in terms of dog attacks especially those in the younger age group. Injuries are often caused by a dog they know.

Dangerous dogs as described in the Companion Animal Act 1998 are dogs declared dangerous by Council as a result of an attack or aggression towards a person or animal.

The Companion Animal Act 1998 lists certain breeds of dogs which are Restricted Breeds.

Both Dangerous Dogs and Restricted Breeds of dogs must comply with specific requirements as set out in the Companion Animal Act 1998 and Regulation.

This includes strict enclosure requirements, warning signs at every entry point to the property and distinctive collars to be worn by the dog(s). When leaving their property,

dog(s) with this classification are subject to other strict control requirements requiring the dog(s) to be muzzled, on a lead with a distinctive collar on the dog(s) and under the effective control of a competent person at all times when in public. If the requirements are not being complied with, Council may issue infringement notices or seize the dog(s).

Regular inspections are required to ensure not only compliance with the above criteria, but to also check the details for the dog on the Companion Animal Register are accurate.

Council has developed a protocol for the investigation of dog attacks, which details the procedures to be followed in both the investigation and enforcement phases of the process. The protocol creates a framework for determining the appropriate course of action, from warnings and education to prosecution, dangerous dog declarations and destruction orders, and conducting regular audits of premises housing declared dangerous dogs.

#### Issues

- Owners of dangerous dogs do not always comply with the requirements of Council's dangerous dog declaration. Ongoing compliance with the terms of the declaration need to be monitored.
- Investigating dog attacks and monitoring ongoing compliance with dangerous dog control requirements is resource intensive for Council.
- Identification of restricted breed dogs is often difficult and can involve a lengthy process of engaging authorised identifiers to determine the outcome.
- The legislative requirement for childproof enclosures for declared dangerous dogs is difficult to interpret.

#### Actions

1. Prepare a dangerous dog protocol and review as appropriate. The protocol should create a framework for determining the appropriate course of action from warnings and education to prosecution, dangerous dog declarations and destruction orders, and conducting regular audits of premises housing declared dangerous dogs and restricted breed dogs.
2. Conduct annual audits of premises where declared dangerous dogs and restricted breed dogs are kept and assess issues including adequacy of child proof enclosures.
3. Develop and conduct a schools education program relating to safety and care for companion animals.
4. Ensure all dangerous dogs and restricted dog records are kept current.
5. Zero tolerance of offences related to dangerous dogs and restricted breeds.

### Off-Leash Areas

#### Objective

- To provide designated free running exercise areas for dogs across the Local Government Area that are as safe as possible for dogs and people.
- To provide a safe environment for dogs and their owners to engage in dog agility activities and to provide socialisation experiences with other dogs.



- To eliminate inappropriate use of parks by dog owners that can create conflict with other users.

### Background

The purpose of leash free areas is to allow dogs to exercise off lead so they can 'burn off' excess energy in a safe environment without being a nuisance to the general public and to provide socialisation experience with other dogs. By providing these opportunities, dogs are less likely to exhibit nuisance behaviour due to boredom and frustration when confined to their yard.

Under the NSW Companion Animal Act 1998 Act, Council is obliged to provide one off-leash area for community use. Council established a dedicated area along Darlington Road and installed signs and a waste bin. The area is integrated into the local park adjacent to the Hunter River.

### Issues

- The off-leash area does not get a lot of use. This could be due to the lack of ongoing promotion by Council or not safe enough or not fenced – too small.
- Many residents exercise their dogs in other parks and reserves throughout the urban area not reserved for leash free dogs.
- Some owners fail to remove dog faeces from the parks and do not maintain effective control of their dog.
- One off-leash area is considered inadequate and there is a need for additional areas to cater for residents without a local facility.

### Actions

1. Investigate the creation of additional off-leash areas in locations where such facilities are currently not provided.
2. Continue proactive patrols of leash free areas to manage inappropriate use.
3. Monitor areas that are not off-leash areas to discourage inappropriate use by dog owners.
4. Provide accurate and simple information to promote the off-leash areas to the public.

## Education

### Objective

- To establish and maintain a range of education strategies to promote responsible pet ownership and to support the regulatory functions of Council.

### Background

The establishment and delivery of cost effective education programs should be the cornerstone of Council's companion animal management program.

Education programs conducted in the past have included school visits promoting responsible pet ownership, newspaper items promoting all aspects of animal control



requirements and static displays at shows and fairs. Rangers also promote and inform pet owners during their daily duties.

#### Issues

- Commitment to education strategies is difficult to maintain due to resource issues.
- Education strategies need to be continually reviewed to ensure relevance for the target audience.
- The effectiveness of educational strategies is difficult to assess.

#### Actions

1. Review education activities to determine their effectiveness where possible.
2. Liaise with local schools to develop an education program aimed at children promoting responsible pet ownership.
3. Develop a comprehensive brochure on responsible pet ownership for use in all educational programs and consider methods to ensure each new registered owner receives a copy.
4. Create public awareness of what responsible pet ownership means.

## Disaster Planning

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### Objective

- To assist companion animal service industries and owners to plan ahead for safe evacuation of companion animals and their owners in the event of natural disasters.

### Background

Disaster planning is critical in minimising the impact of disasters on persons and property. It is important that this planning gives consideration to companion animals.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries is the lead agency for animal evacuation in NSW, and in the event of an emergency, calls upon agencies such as Councils and the RSPCA to provide assistance. It is important that these agencies maintain regular contact and review procedures.

Incidents such as the major flooding event in the Singleton area in June 2007 provide an indication of the threats facing residents and their animals. The flood caused damage to numerous properties with fences destroyed and residents losing pets and cattle. Some residents evacuated from their homes and were forced to leave their animals to fend for themselves.

Similar incidents could arise in the Singleton area and preparedness for such incidents is critical, both for residents and Council. Singleton Council Officers should be prepared to provide assistance to the community during these events and co-ordinate with The NSW Department of Primary Industries to ensure effective response to events.

### Issues

- People have refused to be evacuated from life threatening situations if their pets are not evacuated as well.
- People prefer to remain with their animals after evacuation, which creates challenges for providing evacuation centres, which can house both people and their animals.
- Limited sites have been identified as available to operate large-scale animal evacuation centres in the Singleton Local Government Area.

### Actions

1. Contribute to the development of a database of possible evacuation centres for large numbers of animals.
2. Assist the Department of Primary Industries to review and document assembly procedures at evacuation centres to ensure companion animals are considered.
3. Develop procedures for implementing Council's role in emergency evacuations.
4. Educate the community regarding disaster preparedness for companion animals.

### Strategic Links

- Singleton DISPLAN

## Environmental Issues

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Companion animals can adversely affect the environment in a number of ways – noise pollution, water pollution, faecal pollution and predation on native fauna. Educating companion animal owners to take responsibility for their animals will help the owner to redirect their animal's activity to minimise impact on the surrounding environment.

### Noise Pollution

#### Objective

- To minimise the noise pollution caused by companion animals and improve community amenity.

#### Background

Barking dogs account for 85% of noise complaints received by Council and 16% of all companion animal complaints. There are three options available for the management of barking dog issues in the community:

1. Singleton Council provides information and advice and encourages negotiation between neighbours. Council may serve orders if satisfied that the dog 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 premises.

There are strict parameters in place for Council to investigate and steps to be taken before Council becomes involved. This minimises Council investigating complaints that are vexatious and not in line Council's barking dog procedure.

2. The Community Justice Centre (CJC) is an independent, government funded centre that specialises in settling neighbourhood disputes. Affected neighbours can seek to mediate a solution to the issue in cooperation with their neighbour, facilitated by the CJC.
3. The Chamber Magistrate at the Local Court may make Noise Abatement Orders. These orders may be issued when it is clear the barking has caused a nuisance and attempts have been made without success to resolve the issue by other means.

#### Issues

- Barking dogs are a labour intensive issue for Council with a large portion of Ranger's time spent on barking dog complaints throughout the LGA.
- Barking can be caused by many different things such as separation anxiety, attention seeking, boredom, or perceived territorial incursion. Barking may occur at any time of the day or night and has a different impact on different people in different areas.
- Barking causes annoyance and discomfort to the neighbourhood and can exacerbate neighbourhood disputes in both urban and rural areas.
- Difficult to monitor.

### Actions

1. Review complaint data to ascertain the most common causes of barking dog problems, and the most successful control techniques. Utilise this information in a review of Council's barking dog procedures and to consider alternative procedures for addressing barking dog complaints. Benchmark with other councils to further research solutions.
2. Investigate measures that could be implemented for barking dog complaints, to assist dog owners to understand how their dog behaves when unsupervised.

## Water Pollution

### Objective

- To minimise the impact of companion animals and their faeces on the water catchments of the Singleton LGA.

### Background

Companion animal faeces are a significant environmental and public health issue in urban areas. Pollution of domestic yards, footpaths, parks and reserves by animal faeces and the consequent pollution of waterways by stormwater run-off is of great environmental concern. Pet droppings contribute to high levels of phosphorous and other potentially harmful nutrients in our waterways.

Diseases such as parasites, protozoa and bacteria can be transmitted to people and animals via faecal material and contaminated stormwater. There is a potential for infections to be passed to humans from animals, particularly hookworm and roundworm. Eggs from these worms can remain dormant in the environment for up to one (1) year. River water quality testing shows that faecal coliform levels can be elevated for several days following rainfall and animal faecal material is a key contributor to these elevated levels.

### Issues

- Council staff receives intermittent reports of companion animal owners not picking up their dog's poo.
- The dog poo bin provided in the off-leash area does not appear to be well used.
- Provision of dog poo bags in the off-leash area has not been trialed so the potential effectiveness of this system is not known.
- As dogs are walked within areas other than where receptacles and bags are available, there is a need for dog owners to be educated regarding the importance of being prepared and equipped to pick up dog poo prior to leaving home.
- Householders need to be aware of the environmental consequences of accumulation of dog faeces on private property.

### Actions

1. Distribute stormwater pamphlets at appropriate community events.
2. Research the extent of the dog faeces problem in Singleton (eg parks, walkways) and implement a targeted education / enforcement campaign in those areas.

3. Provide dog poo bins and bags in key areas and also encourage the community to provide their own bags generally as part of responsible pet ownership.
4. Distribute education material that emphasises the importance of the regular removal and appropriate disposal of dog faeces from private property.

## Biodiversity

### Objective

- To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the Singleton LGA;

### Cats

The issues arising from cat management relate predominantly to the impact of cats on wildlife. Cats can also be a nuisance to surrounding neighbours. It is important to note however the distinction between feral cats and owned domestic cats. A domestic cat that has not been declared to be a nuisance by the Council cannot be legally trapped and impounded. Such a cat must be returned to its owner if it can be identified who the owner is.

As a general rule, Council will not assist with the euthanasia costs associated with feral cats. The person responsible for the trapping or capture of these animals will bear the responsibility for transporting these animals to a vet and the financial cost of euthanasia.

Feral cats and free-ranging domestic cats are responsible for a significant number of wildlife deaths every year. It is therefore important that appropriate emphasis be placed upon the management of these animals. Whilst the Act prescribes specific containment requirements for domestic dogs, the control of domestic cats, especially to limit their nocturnal wanderings, is not specifically and clearly legislated.

### Areas Where Cats Are Prohibited

Under The Act, cats are prohibited in the following public places:

- Food preparation or consumption areas;
- Wildlife protection areas (unless it is a public thoroughfare such as a road, footpath or pathway).

### Nuisance Cats

A cat is a nuisance if it:

- Makes persistent noise, or,
- Repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

Dealing with nuisance cat complaints is a more difficult issue than dealing with nuisance dogs. The main reason for this is because cats are more difficult to confine to a property.

## Dogs

Dogs also have a substantial impact on the environment if not properly controlled. If allowed to roam freely dogs, defecate, fight, attack, hunt and breed. Wild dogs are breeding with domestic dogs creating a hybrid which is bigger in size and not afraid of humans. It has been identified by the Midcoast Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) that there is a problem with wild dogs in the Singleton LGA.

## Issues

- There are 117 threatened species occurring in the Upper Hunter IBRA (Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia) sub-region (Office of Environment & Heritage).
- National Parks and Nature Reserves are prohibited areas for companion animals. Owners can be fined if their companion animal is found within these prohibited areas.
- Domestic cats provide a reservoir of breeding animals for wild populations and continually increase the wild cat population.
- Uncontrolled dogs on rural and semi-rural properties are a major threat to native animals.
- A cat is capable of killing many native animals and birds at night with many owners allowing their cats to roam at night.

## Actions

1. Increase community awareness regarding the impact of companion animals on native animals and birds.
2. Implement a community awareness campaign highlighting the advantages of keeping cats confined, including a voluntary cat curfew and education program.
3. Target a community education program prior to and during peak cat breeding season to discourage dumping of kittens.
4. Provision of cat traps to hire to public experiencing nuisance cat behaviour.
5. Continue to promote the benefits of desexing of companion animals.
6. Emphasise in Council education programs that all dogs are to be restrained by a leash when in a public place except for off-leash areas.
7. Develop an arrangement with the Livestock Health and Pest Authority for the sharing of information regarding dog attacks on stock, dog baiting programs and other issues relating to investigations and wild dog programs.

# Definitions

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## **authorised officer**

- (a) An employee of a local authority authorised by the local authority for the purposes of the Companion Animals Act, or
- (b) A police officer.

## **cat**

An animal of the species *Felis catus*, whether or not domesticated.

## **companion animal**

means each of the following:

- (a) a dog
- (b) a cat
- (c) any other animal prescribed by the regulations.

## **council**

Singleton Council.

## **council pound**

- (a) the pound established by Council under the Impounding Act, 1993, or
- (b) any other place approved by Council as a place for the holding of animals for the purposes of the Act.

## **dangerous dog**

a dog for the time being the subject of a declaration by an authorised officer of Council or a court under the Act that the dog is dangerous.

## **menacing dog**

a dog for the time being the subject of a declaration by an authorised officer of Council or a court under the Act that the dog is menacing.

## **desexed**

rendered permanently incapable of reproduction.

## **Director-General**

Director General of the office of Local Government.

## **feral cat**

an unowned cat.

## **nuisance cat**

defined in Section 31 of the Act.

## **nuisance dog**

defined in Section 21 of the Act

## **owner**

defined in Section 7 of the Act.

## **public place**

- (a) any pathway, road, bridge, reserve, park, garden and
- (b) any other place that the public are entitled to use.

## **Register**

Register of Companion Animals.

## **registered**

registered under the Act.

## **restricted dog**

defined in Section 55 of the Act.

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## Performance Indicators

### Identification and Registration

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide educational materials to local companion animal service industries to promote identification and registration of companion animals.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To encourage the permanent microchip identification of all companion animals in Singleton to facilitate the prompt return of lost or stray companion animals to their owners.</li> <li>To encourage the statewide lifetime registration of all companion animals in Singleton in accordance with the Act.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of animal's microchipped.</li> <li>Increase in the number of animals registered.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold regular Rego Roundups and other events to facilitate identification, registration and responsible pet ownership.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To encourage the permanent microchip identification of all companion animals in Singleton to facilitate the prompt return of lost or stray companion animals to their owners.</li> <li>To encourage the statewide lifetime registration of all companion animals in Singleton in accordance with the Act.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of animal's microchipped.</li> <li>Increase in the number of animals registered.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information for display within veterinary surgeries which reminds companion animal owners to notify of changes to ownership, address and other details.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To facilitate the prompt return to owner of seized animals and therefore reduce the number of animals that need to be impounded.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is prepared and distributed to vets.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow up companion animal owners who have their animal's microchipped but not registered.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a fast and efficient service for customers updating or registering details on the NSW Companion Animal Register.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of animals registered.</li> </ul>

## Impounding Animals

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that companion animal transport and impound protocols follow best practice guidelines provided by NSW Agriculture.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a best practice animal care facility and transport for impounded animals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of facilities completed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage authorised identifiers and animal owners to record as much owner contact information as possible to facilitate their prompt return to owner.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To facilitate the prompt return to owner of seized animals and therefore reduce the number of animals that need to be impounded.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of animals returned to owner.</li> <li>Reduction in the number of animals impounded.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively seek rescue agencies and note what each is specifically looking for.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To continue to build a rapport with rescue agencies.</li> <li>To improve rehoming percentages for cats and dogs from the 2016/2017 statistics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in the number of animals euthanized and an increase in the number of animals rehomed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue the placement of digital photos of unidentified strays on Council's social media account to facilitate the release of animals from the pound and reduce rates of euthanasia.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To keep social media posts up to date to allow owner's of impounded animals the ability to locate them and have them released from the animal management facility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Photo posts on social media for every impounded stray animal.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce a report on the current pound and explore options, including a potentially new facility.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To improve the housing facility (the pound) of stray companion animals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision made for the new pound in the 2016/2017 budget.</li> </ul>

## Animal Welfare

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to promote the benefits of desexing of companion animals.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure Council staff regard animal welfare as a high priority in all dealings with the community and their companion animals.</li> <li>To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the percentage of animals desexed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information to the community on appropriate animal housing and care as recommended by the RSPCA.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To encourage companion animal owners to provide appropriate mental and physical challenges for their companion animal that improve animal welfare and reduce adverse impact on the general community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding nuisance behaviour.</li> </ul>

## Public Safety

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a dangerous dog protocol and review as appropriate. The protocol should create a framework for determining the appropriate course of action from warnings and education to prosecution, dangerous dog declarations and destruction orders, and conducting regular audits of premises housing declared dangerous dogs and restricted breed dogs with zero tolerance of offences related to dangerous dogs and restricted breeds.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To improve community awareness of the importance of safety around companion animals.</li> <li>To improve owner's awareness of their responsibility to maintain their animal under effective control in public places.</li> <li>To ensure an efficient and effective response to reported dog attacks.</li> <li>To ensure all restricted and dangerous dogs comply with the Act's requirements.</li> <li>To reduce the number of dogs being owned in the restricted breeds category.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in numbers of dog attacks.</li> <li>Increase in compliance with dangerous dog control requirements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct annual audits of premises where declared dangerous dogs and restricted breed dogs are kept and identify and assess any issues present.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure all restricted and dangerous dogs comply with the Act's requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in compliance with dangerous dog and restricted breed control requirements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct proactive patrols of the LGA and issue cautions/fine for breaches of the Companion Animals Act 1998.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure members of the public are complying with current requirements of the Companion Animals Act 1998.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in education for the public and decrease in breaches of the Companion Animals Act 1998.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and conduct a schools education program relating to safety and care for companion animals.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To improve community awareness of the importance of safety around companion animals.</li> <li>To improve owner's awareness of their responsibility to maintain their animal under effective control in public places.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in numbers of community education sessions delivered.</li> <li>Reduction in numbers of dog attacks.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all dangerous and restricted dog records are kept current.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To keep up to date records of restricted and dangerous dogs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and current records are available for use.</li> </ul>
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### Off Leash Areas

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the creation of additional off-leash areas in locations where such facilities are currently not provided.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide free running exercise areas for dogs across the LGA to provide opportunities for dogs to exercise.</li> <li>• To provide a safe environment for dogs and their owners to engage in dog agility activities and to provide socialisation experiences with other dogs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of off-leash areas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and manage off-leash areas to manage inappropriate use.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a safe environment for dogs and their owners to engage in dog agility activities and to provide socialisation experiences with other dogs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal complaints regarding off-leash areas.</li> <li>• Absence of repeat offenders among users.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor parks that are not off-leash areas to discourage inappropriate use by dog owners.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To eliminate inappropriate use of parks by dog owners which creates conflict with other users.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in complaints regarding inappropriate use of parks by dog owners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide accurate and simple information to promote the off-leash areas to the public.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide free running exercise areas for dogs across the LGA to provide opportunities for dogs to exercise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An informative brochure is produced which encourages the use of off-leash areas.</li> </ul>

## Education

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor all education activities to determine their effectiveness where possible.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish and maintain a range of education strategies to promote responsible pet ownership and to support the regulatory functions of Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education activities are reviewed annually.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a comprehensive brochure on responsible pet ownership for use in all education programs and consider methods to ensure each new registered owner receives a copy.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish and maintain a range of education strategies to promote responsible pet ownership and to support the regulatory functions of Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brochure is available for use by September 2018.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create public awareness of what responsible pet ownership means.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish and maintain a range of education strategies to promote responsible pet ownership and to support the regulatory functions of Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education strategy delivers this message.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate the wider community through school visitations promoting responsible pet ownership.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish and maintain a range of education strategies to promote responsible pet ownership and to support the regulatory functions of Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education program delivered.</li> </ul>

## Noise Pollution

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review complaint data to ascertain the most common causes of barking dog problems, and the most successful control techniques. Utilise this information in a review of Council's barking dog procedures and implement new procedures for addressing barking dog complaints. Benchmark with other councils to further research solutions.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To minimise the noise pollution caused by companion animals and improve community amenity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding nuisance behaviour.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate measures that could be implemented for barking dog complaints, to assist dog owners to understand how their dog behaves when unsupervised.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To minimise the noise pollution caused by companion animals and improve community amenity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding nuisance behaviour.</li> </ul>

## Water Pollution

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute stormwater pamphlets at appropriate community events.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To minimise the impact of companion animals and their faeces on the water catchments of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding dog faeces in public places.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research the extent of the dog faeces problem in LGA (eg parks, walkways) and implement a targeted education / enforcement campaign in those areas.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To minimise the impact of companion animals and their faeces on the water catchments of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding dog faeces in public places.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide dog poo bins and bags in key areas and also encourage the community to provide their own bags generally as part of responsible pet ownership.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To minimise the impact of companion animals and their faeces on the water catchments of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding dog faeces in public places.</li> <li>The number of dog poo bins increases.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute education material that emphasises the importance of the regular removal and appropriate disposal of dog faeces from private property.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To minimise the impact of companion animals and their faeces on the water catchments of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing throughout all education programs.</li> </ul>



## Biodiversity

Action	Priority (High / Medium / Low)	Related Objective	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase community awareness regarding the impact of companion animals on native animals and birds.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding feral animals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase community awareness regarding the impact of companion animals on native animals and birds.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of companion animals on biodiversity to be included in all education material by December 2018.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a community awareness campaign highlighting the advantages of keeping cats confined, including a voluntary cat curfew.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The awareness campaign is implemented by December 2018.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target a community education program during peak cat breeding season to discourage dumping of kittens.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education program to discourage dumping of kittens to be implemented by December 2018.</li> <li></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of cat traps for hire to people experiencing nuisance cat behaviour.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in complaints regarding feral animals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a policy regarding the disposal of feral cats caught by members of the public.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy, if required, to be implemented by September 2018.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasise in Council education programs that all dogs are to be restrained by a leash when in a public place except for off-leash areas.</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in complaints regarding companion animals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an arrangement with the Livestock Health and Pest Authority for the sharing of information regarding dog attacks on stock, dog baiting programs and other issues relating to investigations and wild dog programs.</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the awareness and minimise the potential impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of the LGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOU is developed with Livestock Health and Pest Authority by December 2018.</li> </ul>

## **Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement**

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Council aims to monitor, review and continually improve the implementation of the Companion Animal Management Plan to provide for efficient and sustainable management of companion animals.

Monitoring is integrated into the Plan so that if a strategy is ineffective it can be modified appropriately. Regular review of available statistical information helps to compare implementation actions with plan priorities. Continuous improvement will ensure sustainability of actions.

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