

Meeting notes

Companion Animals Working Group



Date: 22 June 2021

Time: 3pm – 4pm

Location: Microsoft Teams

Chairperson/Coordinator: Sara Foster, Unit Manager Environmental Compliance and Systems

Attendance

Members:

Allan Benson
Nicole Cooper
Louise Harding
Velma Harris
Marilyn Jurlina
Greg Kelman
Terrie Lynn
Te're Melrose
Dee Walton

Status:

Present
Apology
Apology
Apology
Apology
Present
Apology
Apology
Present

Staff:

Scott Cox, Director Environment and Planning Apology
Sara Foster, Unit Manager Environmental Compliance and System Present
Rochelle Housego, Personal Assistant Environmental Compliance and System Present

1 Introduction

The chairperson welcomed the group and completed an Acknowledgement of Country.

Apologies received and members absent without apology were noted.

The chairperson called for any disclosures of interest. No disclosures were received.

2 Responsible Dog Ownership Policy development

There will be a separate Responsible Pet Ownership Policy for dogs and cats rather than a single Policy which covers both.

The Responsible Dog Ownership Policy will be high level and set clear standards and expectations, and will be used to support decision making.

After the Policy has been adopted, a supporting Strategy will be developed that will outline processes and procedures associated with responsible dog ownership. Furthermore, the Strategy will be more detailed and provide an action plan which supports the implementation of the Policy.

Council will also adopt a communication campaign that will run alongside the Policy. The campaign will set the tone, explain what we are trying to achieve, and outline Council's commitments and role. It will also outline the responsibility of the individual dog owners. Responsible dog ownership means more than simply loving your dog. Dog ownership is a serious commitment for the lifetime of the animal

Member feedback

- There are many posts regarding dog attacks on social media (mainly Facebook), which leads us to believe there may be a lot more dog attacks occurring that are not reported to Council.
- Council is often blamed for dog attacks, and there is an unrealistic expectation for Council to prevent all dog attacks that occur on the Central Coast. Recent data generated from Council's CX system showed the majority of dog attacks occur in neighbourhoods, and only a small number of dog attacks occur in public places where Rangers patrol.
- The key to success is clear communication to Central Coast residents that defines both Council's role and limitations as well as what Council expects from a responsible pet owner.
- Would like a communication piece around dog attack numbers on the Central Coast and where they occur. Explain that Council patrols public areas and not residential areas.
- Need to connect with key groups in our region (Police/RSPCA ect) on a regular basis to discuss and tackle key issues. It would also be a great opportunity to network and share ideas.
- Need to set a general understanding of expectations. Define what the standards are and communicate effectively. The Central Coast has a large number of dogs that has a huge impact on the community.

Draft Policy review

The working group undertook a high-level review of the Policy structure, and key topics covered and were satisfied that the draft Policy included all critical topic areas. The group agreed that there should be a dedicated section on backyard breeding.

Meeting notes

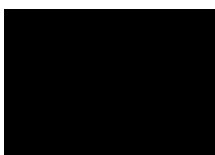
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Next steps

The Community Safety team is currently finalising the Responsible Dog Ownership Policy that will be tabled at an upcoming Council meeting in the next eight weeks. The proposed Policy will then go out on public exhibition for public opinion and changes made if required. The Strategy will follow after the Policy is adopted by Council.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm.

Meeting notes finalised and endorsed 25 June 2021.



Sara Foster, Unit Manager Environmental Compliance and Systems
Chairperson/Coordinator