

# Companion Animals Advisory Committee Meeting Record 26 November 2020



Location:	Zoom Meeting	
Date:	26 November 2020	
Time	Started at: 2.02pm	Closed at: 3.06pm
Chair	Scott Cox – Director Environment and Planning	
File Ref	F2019/00998	

**Present:**

Allan Benson, Louise Harding, Velma Harris

**External Representative present:**

Marilyn Jurlina – SOCARES Animal Care Facility Charmhaven, Deanna Walton – Central Coast Animal Care Facility

**Council Staff present:**

Scott Cox – Director Environment and Planning, Sara Foster – Unit Manager Business Support and Systems, Warren Murphy – Section Manager Contracts and Projects, Rennae Projceski – Section Manager Community Safety, Kelly Drover – Advisory Group Support Officer

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**Item 1                    Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and Apologies**

Apologies received: Greg Kelman, Te're Melrose

The Chairperson declared the meeting open and completed an Acknowledgement of Country and Connection to Land Statement.

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**Item 2                    Disclosures of Interest**

The Chair called for any Disclosures of Interest.

No disclosures were received.

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**Item 3                    Confirmation of Previous Meeting Record**

The Advisory Group confirmed the Meeting Record from 28 July 2020.

It was noted that it had previously been requested for the Advisory Group to be provided with statistics of the pounds at Charmhaven and Erina in regard to impounding lost dogs.

**Action:** Statistics of Charmhaven and Erina Pounds in regard to impounding lost dogs to be a standing agenda item.

The Advisory Group reviewed the Action Log.

In regard to Action Item 22 – a response was received from the Office of Local Government indicating they will add our request for amendment to the legislation to their next review process.

**Action:** Letter from Office of Local Government regarding cat controls to be circulated to Advisory Group Members.

In regard to action Item 24 – Allan Benson advised that he made a personal submission into the Federal Inquiry into Domestic and Feral Cats.

**Action:** Staff to confirm whether submissions are still open for the Federal Inquiry into Domestic and Feral Cats.

#### **Item 4                    Animal Fostering on the Central Coast**

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Warren Murphy (Section Manager Contracts and Projects) advised that for the last quarter (plus October) there were 97 animals fostered across the Erina and Charmhaven facilities, noting that the fostering programs aren't run by Council, they are facilitated by Central Coast Animal Care and SOCARES.

The SOCARES facility at Charmhaven only foster animals that are vulnerable (pregnant cat with young kitten, pups etc) and this is usually handled by foster carers that are staff or close associates. Currently looking at ramping this up and actively looking for a coordinator to run that program.

Central Coast Animal Care facility at Erina do foster out vulnerable animals and also have a foster care program through Central Coast Community Rescue. Currently looking at ramping up their fostering program due to the RSPCA at Somersby and Hunter restricting the intake of private surrenders.

#### **Item 5                    Impounding Requirements and Expectations under the Companion Animals Act**

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Renee Projceski (Section Manager Community Safety) advised that Council Rangers are given the power to seize roaming dogs and do reactively and proactively attend to roaming dog concerns as part of their daily duties.

The Advisory Group expressed concerns regarding the problem on the Central Coast with dogs and people who are being attacked, roaming dogs and nuisance dogs. A major concern is that we don't have a policy in regard to nuisance or roaming dogs.

It was noted that Central Coast Council have the highest rate of dog ownership in NSW with 136,733 dogs identified in the LGA as at 30 September 2020. The next biggest being Lake Macquarie with just over 89,000 dogs.

At the 28 May 2020 Companion Animals Advisory Group meeting Open Space Projects and Planning staff advised that Council was currently reviewing the dog park/off-leash parks strategy and a revised strategy was expected to be available for community consultation before 30 December 2020.

**Action:** Staff to follow up with Open Space Projects and Planning staff to confirm where the review on dog parks/off-leash parks is up to and provide an update at the next meeting.

Louise Harding requested it be noted that she is seeking the Advisory Group to support the need for a policy around nuisance, off leash and roaming dogs.

**Action:** Staff to look at benchmarking against other Councils in terms of animals for our region, the area the rangers have to cover and look at what the standard should be and use this information to progress the development of a policy for nuisance and roaming dogs.

## **Item 6                    What is the Definition of a Feral Cat?**

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Warren Murphy (Section Manager Contracts and Projects) advised that there is no clear-cut answer when it comes to the definition of a 'feral cat'.

The Animal Welfare League look at whether a cat is owned, semi-owned, unowned, feral, community cats or stray cats. Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment identify feral cats as the same species as domestic cats, however they live and reproduce in the wild and survive by hunting or scavenging. The Biosecurity Regulation says that 'feral' and 'wild' are interchangeable, and the National Parks Act identifies anything that is non domesticated as being feral. The Dictionary definition is anything that is non domesticated.

Allan Benson advised that he has put together a flow chart on determining whether a cat is feral or not and suggested workshopping this at the next face to face meeting of the Advisory Group.

**Action:** The Definition of a Feral Cat to be included on the agenda for the first face to face meeting of the Advisory Group in 2021.

## **Item 7                    Upper House Inquiry – Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act 1979**

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Warren Murphy (Section Manager Contracts and Projects) advised that the Upper House Inquiry were calling for submissions to changes to the legislation which is *Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act 1979* and noted that we don't have anything to do with this apart from working alongside Police and the RSPCA.

Velma Harris noted that this was an item she requested to be included on the agenda and it actually related to the death of the mother dog and some of her puppies at the Erina facility. It was noted that there needs to be strong health and safety policies in place to ensure this doesn't happen again.

## **Item 8                    Resourcing of Current Facilities and Status of Regional Facility**

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Sara Foster (Unit Manager Business Support and Systems) advised that we are currently completing some site compatibility and feasibility studies of sites that would be suitable for a Regional Facility. Council's current financial situation is an issue, but we are still looking for a site that will suit the needs for this

type/size facility. There was \$200,000 allocated to a design and concept project however we need a site first. Council has also been in discussion with Lake Macquarie to develop a *Memorandum of Understanding* to assist each other in the investigation phase including any potential land opportunities that they might have. Council is also completing in house investigations in terms of business modelling and looking at other facilities.

Warren Murphy (Section Manager Contracts and Projects) advised that at the moment, due to financial constraints we just keep moving forward as we are and there are no significant changes to resourcing in respect to rangers or current facilities. However, in light of the shut down of the RSPCA facility at Somersby, we need to look at what the impact is going to be on the Erina and Charmhaven facilities.

**Action:** Discussion to be held at the next meeting on business modelling and suggestions regarding the Regional Facility.

## **Item 9                    General Business and Close**

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Velma Harris raised that matter of the Erina facility being quite full, apparently there are a lot of people trying to surrender animals but are being rediverted to the Charmhaven facility.

**Action:** Director Environment and Planning to take on notice the matter of the Erina Facility being full and residents being rediverted to Charmhaven and report back to the Advisory Group at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.06pm

**Next Meeting:            February 2021 TBC**