

# Domestic Animal Management Plan

2013-2017

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Adopted 1 December 2015

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## 1. Introduction and Context of this Plan

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The primary focus of this Plan is the management of companion animals, namely dogs and cats. Towong Shire Council acknowledges the role it plays in promoting responsible pet ownership and enforcing legislation. We are committed to balancing the needs of pet owners with those in our community who do not own pets.

Consideration has been given to both parties in the development of our Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013-2017.

This Plan has been developed in accordance with Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and sets out a formalised approach to increase the awareness of domestic animal management practices within Towong Shire.

Towong Shire Council recognises the value domestic pets contribute in making Towong Shire a vibrant and live able Shire. Domestic pets are not only considered part of a family, but are an integral part of a wider community. Research demonstrates that pets contribute to building a strong sense of community and developing active social capital; vital to any vibrant, healthy community.

Pet ownership is positively associated with social interactions, community involvement and increased feelings of neighbourhood friendliness and sense of community.

With about 63 percent of Australians owning a dog or cat, these benefits, when aggregated across the whole community, are of significant interest to Council and others concerned with building healthier, happier neighbourhoods.

In addition, these benefits create a ripple effect that extends beyond pet owners into the broader community, with pets helping to smooth the way for social interaction and general 'out and aboutness'.

Both anecdote and research suggests that pets are well recognised ice-breakers. Dogs, for example, can stimulate conversation and contact between strangers and trigger positive social interaction.

Studies undertaken by the School of Population Health at the University of Western Australia showed that half of all dog owners surveyed indicated that they had come to know locals in their suburb as a result of their dog.

Residents' chatting to each other as a result of a pet is not just a social nicety. Such community-based interactions between people have the very real potential to break down the barriers and stereotypes that separate us from 'others' while playing an important role in building trust and a deep sense of community at the neighbourhood level.

Pets provide increased opportunities for families to be more active; companionship to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely and assist people with a disability or illness to maintain independence and participate more fully in community life.



## 2. Background

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Local Government has long been the level of government primarily responsible for domestic animal management.

Section 68A of the Domestic Animal Act 1994 (the Act) requires all Victorian councils to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan) at four yearly intervals. A copy of the plan and any subsequent amendments must be provided to the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries. Council is required to then report on the plans implementation in its annual report.

### 2.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of the Plan is to provide a strategic map to support the community towards the goal of responsible pet ownership and to assist Council in achieving a professional, consistent and proactive approach to domestic animal management practices.

The Plan identifies current activities and future actions to address the following areas, as required by Section 68A of the Act:-

- Identify methods for evaluating animal control services;
- Promote responsible pet ownership;
- Ensure compliance with the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and Regulations;
- Minimise the risk of dog attacks;
- Address over population and euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
- Encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats;
- Minimise the potential for nuisance;
- Identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs;
- Review all existing Council orders and local laws that relate to dogs and cats;
- Identify programs for training of authorised animal management officers;
- Provide for the periodic evaluation of programs and service strategies.

## 3. Strategic Direction

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### Towong Shire Council Plan

#### Vision

We will be a World Class small Council and Towong Shire will be the ideal place to live.

#### Mission

To provide leadership and service to the Towong Shire community that adds value and enhances social, economic and environmental wellbeing now and in the future.

#### Strategic Objective – Community Wellbeing

Assist Towong Shire residents in the attainment of a high level of health and safety, resilience and connectedness to their communities

#### Strategic Objective - Environmental Sustainability

Provide proactive support to DEPI Wild Dog Program and lobby for increased resourcing in the Towong Shire

#### Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin the actions of this Plan with regard to domestic animals:

- The belief that pets contribute to quality of life.
- A requirement to balance the needs of those who own pets and those who do not.
- Valuing responsible pet ownership.
- Proactive animal management and education within the community.
- Protection of the environment from any negative impacts of dogs and cats.
- Working in partnership with others to achieve positive outcomes for the community.
- Local Government plays a leadership role in animal management.

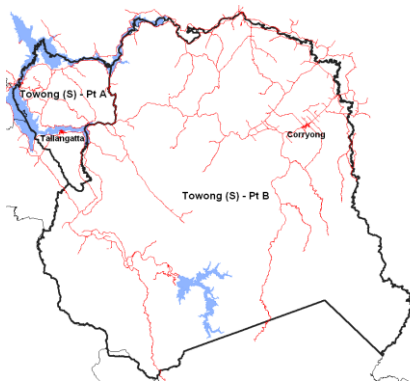
## 4. About Towong Shire

Towong Shire is located in far north-east Victoria and is bounded by the Murray River to the North and East, the East Gippsland and Alpine Shires to the South and Indigo Shire and the City of Wodonga to the West. It occupies an area of 6673 square kilometers. The Shire is located on the north-eastern border of Victoria and New South Wales.

Towong Shire is comprised of two Statistical Local Areas (SLAs), Towong SLA Part A and Towong SLA Part B. Part A is located in the north western part of the Shire and contains the towns of Tallangatta, Bellbridge and Bethanga. The larger SLA "B" comprises the balance of the Shire and includes Corryong, Walwa, Towong, Tintaldra, Cudgewa, Eskdale and Mitta Mitta.

### Towns and communities

Bellbridge, Berringama, Bethanga, Burrowye, Bullioh, Corryong, Cudgewa, Dartmouth, Eskdale, Granya, Koetong, Lucyvale, Mitta Mitta, Nariel, Old Tallangatta, Talgarno, Tallangatta, Tallangatta Valley, Tintaldra, Towong



Total Population 5,958 (2011)  
Total Households 2,336

	SLA A	SLA B
<b>Area (Square Kilometres)</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>6091</b>
<b>% Total Shire Area</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>91%</b>
<b>No. Dwellings (2006)</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>1439</b>
<b>% Total Population (2006)</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Population Density (People per square kilometre)</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>0.6</b>

Over time, agriculture in the Towong Shire has become increasingly dependent on beef cattle farming, and this has been chiefly at the expense of dairy cattle farming. In 2006, Towong contained a total of 470 farming enterprises and the total combined area of these farms was 173360 hectares representing around 25% of the total land area of the Shire. The number of farms in the Towong Shire has decreased since the late 1990's, despite this, the estimated value of agricultural operations has increased steadily by about 50% over the same period.

The Shire's agricultural production is divided between relatively few large scale farming operations and a large number of small to medium scale grazing enterprises. Trends in the Shire suggest an increase in the proportion of medium-sized operations, whilst the number of economically large enterprises has remained relatively static over the past two decades. Although there has been a trend toward increasing economic scale, both beef and dairy farms in the Towong Shire tend to operate at a

smaller economic scale compared to those same types of farming enterprises within the region. The challenge for these producers is the lack of productivity gains which will impact on their ability to maintain real incomes. Although it remains the single largest employment category, employment in agriculture in Towong is decreasing in absolute numbers. This decline is consistent with State and National trends.

Towong Shire, situated in far north-eastern Victoria, possesses some of Australia's most pristine environment. Unique wilderness areas, lakes, rivers and streams create diverse landscapes that are enjoyed by around 6,000 residents and many more visitors across an area of 6,600 square kilometers.



## 5. Current Programs and Service Levels

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Towong Shire's Ranger and Local Laws officer (0.5EFT) administers and provides a broad range of services to ensure that Council meets its legislative responsibilities relating to the management of domestic animals. They include but are not limited to:

- Educating residents and promoting responsible pet ownership.
- Maintaining a domestic animal register.
- Providing advice on domestic animal matters.
- Dealing with and investigating animal complaints for the community.
- Impounding of wandering, unwanted/surrendered and/or feral dogs and cats.
- Undertaking registration door knocks.
- Administration and control of Dangerous and Restricted Breed dogs for compliance with legislation.
- Investigating dog attacks.
- Providing a 24 hour 7 day a week emergency service.
- Inspection and registration of domestic animal businesses.
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with veterinarians.

### 5.1 Statistical Data

Key Statistical Data 2013/14	
No. registered dogs	1009
Estimated dog population	1300
No. registered cats	226
Estimated cat population	450
No. Declared menacing dogs registered	0
No of reported animal attacks	
No. of dog impounded	19
No. of dogs returned to owner	14
No. of dogs re-housed	5
No. of dogs euthanized	6
No of cats impounded	3
No of cats returned to owner	1
No of cats re-housed	1
No. of cats euthanized	1
No. of animal infringements issued	

## 5.2 Council Requirements

Towong Shire Council has the following Orders, Local Laws and Procedures currently in place to assist in the effective management of dogs, cats and livestock.

### Council Orders

- Compulsory micro chipping of all new dogs and cats registered effective 10 April 2009.
- Cat curfew 9pm to 6am, seven days a week.
- Dogs declared dangerous must not reside within Towong Shire Council's boundaries.

### Local Law No. 2 – Part 6 Keeping of Animals

#### 6.1 Restrictions on the Number of Animals that may be kept on any Premises

For the purpose of calculating the number of animals that are allowed to be kept without a permit, the progeny of any animal listed in Clause 6.1 shall be exempt for a period of twelve (12) weeks after its (their) birth.

In deciding whether to grant a permit the Council must take into consideration:

- complaints received in relation to the keeping of the animals; and
- the amenity of the area; and
- the type and additional numbers of animals to be kept; and
- the likely effects on adjoining owners; and
- the adequacy of animal shelters; and
- the proximity of any adjacent habitable dwelling to penning facilities; and
- whether the local community is in support of the application; and
- whether the dogs or cats are registered; and
- whether relevant provisions of the *Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* can be complied with; and
- recommendations as a result of an onsite inspection from a ranger/authorised officer; and
- any other matter relevant to the circumstances associated with the application.

#### Permit Conditions

The conditions of any permit may include:

- the period of the permit;
- the location where the animals housing/shelter will be placed;
- the numbers and types of animals to be kept;
- housing conditions and waste disposal requirements;
- food storage facilities;
- nuisance minimisation requirements;
- details of the permit holder and emergency contact numbers;
- payment of the prescribed fee;
- any other conditions deemed relevant to the application.

#### 6.2 Conditions under which Animals are kept

The occupier of any land on which an animal is kept must ensure that:

- the ground within three metres of the place where the animal is kept is free from dry grass, weeds, refuse, rubbish; and other material harbouring, or which may harbour, rats or other vermin;
- all food for consumption by the animal is kept or stored in a vermin and fly-proof receptacle;

- the ground surrounding the place where the animal is kept is drained to the satisfaction of Council;
- all manure, excrement, refuse or rubbish produced or accumulated by the animal is, as soon after the production or accumulation as is reasonably practicable, placed in a container:
  - which is vermin and fly-proof;
  - which has impervious walls and an impervious floor;
- Towong Shire Council Policy Document – “Standards and Guidelines Local Law No.2 – Community Amenity and Municipal Places” 19
- which is maintained in a good state of repair so as to prevent escape or leakage;
- which is kept covered by a fly and vermin-proof lid;
- which is maintained in a clean and sanitary condition; and
- the contents of which are removed and disposed of at least once every week, or at such other intervals as an authorised officer considers necessary, having regard for the objectives of this local law.

Any structure used to house animals must be placed a minimum distance of 1 metre from any boundary and:

- be insulated to minimise noise emissions; and
- must have impervious walls and flooring; and
- must be a minimum 15 metres from any adjacent habitable room.

### 6.3 Noise and Smell

Upon detection of a breach of clause 6.3 of the Local Law, an authorised officer may issue a Notice to Comply directing the person responsible to rectify the behaviour so that the behaviour no longer breaches the Local Law. The Notice to Comply is detailed in Schedule 1.

If the matter is considered urgent or is endangering anyone or anything, an authorised officer may request the person responsible to cease the nuisance immediately and if they refuse or fail to comply, commence enforcement proceedings on the person responsible for the behaviour.

In circumstances where a permit has been issued, a show cause notice is to be sent to the owner of occupier of the land detailing the permit breaches and request why the permit should not be rescinded. If no response is received within the specified period or the response will not negate the nuisance, then a notice rescinding the permit is to be issued giving a reasonable period to comply. Failure to comply with this request may result in initiating enforcement proceedings.

### 6.4 Animal Litter

Persons in charge of animals must remove any excrement left by those animals on a road or public place as soon as it is deposited.

Dog owners exercising dogs on a road or public place must carry a litter device to remove any excrement deposited. Excrement may be placed in a public litter bin but must be enclosed in a wrapper.

Persons not removing their dog’s excrement from a municipal place or road may be issued with an Infringement Notice.

### 6.5 Wandering Animals

Upon detection of an animal wandering, the animal should be impounded or returned to the property where it is kept.

If returned to the property, an authorised officer is to issue a Notice to Comply directing the property owner or occupier to reinstate fencing or take such action so Towong Shire Council Policy Document – “Standards and Guidelines Local Law No.2 – Community Amenity and Municipal Places” 20 that the animal is adequately contained to the property. The Notice to Comply should include:

- the name and address of the land owner or occupier who owns the animal (if known), or if unknown, the Notice may list "the Occupier";
- the address of where the animal is normally kept;
- works to be undertaken
- the date when the reinstatement of the fencing is to be completed by;
- the penalties associated with non compliance including compulsory reinstatement;
- any other conditions deemed appropriate.

#### Council Procedures and Guidelines

Refer Appendixes 1-7

- Flow Chart – Investigation and Actions in Relation to a Local Laws complaint or issue.
- Flow Chart – Permit Application Process
- Flow Chart 2 – Permit Appeal process
- Flow Chart 3 - Investigation and Actions in Relation to a Local Laws complaint or issue – minor issue – existing or no permit.
- Flow Chart 4 - Investigation and Actions in Relation to a Local Laws complaint or issue – minor issue – existing permit.
- Flow Chart 5 – Investigation and Actions in Relation to a Local Laws complaint or issue – major issue – no permit.
- Guidelines - Investigation and Actions in Relation to a Local Laws application, complaint or issue

### **5.3 Animal Management Staffing and Operational Structure**

Domestic animal management is a function of the Local Laws section of the Towong Shire Council. Local Laws form part of the Technical Services Department which is responsible for the delivery of regulatory services of the Towong Shire Council. Within Technical Services Local Law enforcement employs 0.5 full time staff.



### **5.4 Training of Authorised Officer**

Towong Shire Council is committed to the training of our Local Laws Officer. An annual training program is developed for the officer to ensure they receive appropriate training.

The objective of any training and development is to support the Local Laws staff in having the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work.

A training register detailing all qualifications and training courses completed by each Local Laws Officer is maintained and updated annually to reflect any training undertaken or required.

## 5.5 Registration and Identification

Towong Shire Council mails out registration renewal notices prior to 10 April each year.

Any renewal payments not received by the due date of 10 April are followed up with a reminder notice advising of penalties for failing to register a dog or cat.

Registration renewal forms are also used as an opportunity to advertise legislative changes i.e. requirement to register dog/cat by age three months and compulsory micro chipping of all new dogs and cats being registered.

When mailing these notices we often include pamphlets and inserts to further inform and educate our community on domestic animal matters.

New registration applications are available at all Council service centres and via phone.

### Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Animal Registration forms available at Council service and can be requested by telephoning Council.
- Door knock “hot spot” areas or areas where complaints have been received in relation to registration requirements.
- Maintenance of computerised registration database.
- Advertisements in local newspapers, council newsletters, webpage and Facebook

### Compliance Activities

- Issuing annual animal registration renewal notices and lifetime animal tags.
- Follow up unpaid renewal notices with reminder notices.
- Issuing of infringement notices for failing to register where appropriate.
- Impounding of wandering dogs and cats.
- Ensure that all seized or impounded animals are registered prior to release to their owner.
- Review animal registration fees annually during the budget process.
- Serving of Notices to Comply for minor breaches of the law.
- Investigate all reports of unregistered animals in a timely manner.
- Attending properties unannounced to conduct on the spot inspections where there have been ongoing or serious complaints against a property or person.

## 5.6 Animal Nuisance Complaints

All animal complaints received are investigated in a timely manner to minimise the potential for complaints escalating. Officers make every effort to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of both parties.

For the most part, nuisance complaints received by Towong Shire Council relate to either barking dogs or stray cats. It is recognised that barking dog complaints can at times cause great frustration for both parties. The Local Laws Officer works hard to balance the interests and rights of both the dog owner and the complainant.

Dog owners can become desensitised to the sound of their own dog barking and may be unaware it is a nuisance to neighbours. An effective resolution is often achieved by alerting the dog owner to the fact their dogs barking is becoming a nuisance. Neighbours who are unable, or find it difficult, to speak to their neighbours regarding this matter should make contact with Towong Shire Council for assistance.

The Council Officer will first work with the dog owner to support them in identifying the cause of the barking and discuss possible solutions. The majority of cases involve dogs that are bored or responding to visual stimulation. Both causes are often easily resolved with training, toys, blocking a view or exercising the dog more frequently.

Complainants may be asked to keep noise logs (records of dates, times and duration of barking) should the matter continue and further intervention be required. Noise logs form part of the Barking Dog Complaint Form and are available from the Towong Shire Customer Service Centre's, and Local Laws Officers can assist with explaining how these are to be filled out.

In response to nuisance complaints received on stray cats Towong Shire offers residents' cat cages to assist in safely containing offending animals trespassing on their property or wandering during the curfew period. Local Laws Officers will then attend during normal business hours and impound any contained cats. These cages are available on payment of a fully refundable deposit.

#### Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Make information available at Council service centers, libraries and on Council's website.
- Promote the various resources available to encourage the correct selection of a new pet such as 'Select a Pet' website.
- Provide a wide range of pamphlets.
- Distribute brochures to residents when requested and when investigating complaints.
- Advertisements in local newspapers and Council newsletters.

#### Compliance Activities

- Investigate all complaints received.
- Encourage complainants to speak directly to dog owners to alert them to their dog barking.
- Record all nuisance complaints in Council's record management systems.
- Provide cat cages to residents for containing trespassing cats as requested.
- Impound all unregistered dogs found at large.
- Issue infringements for dogs found at large.
- Impound or return wandering registered pets to owners.
- Attending properties unannounced to conduct on the spot inspections where there have been ongoing or serious complaints against a property or person.

## **5.7 Dog Attacks**

Towong Shire Council considers any reported dog attacks as the highest priority and dispatches a Local Laws Officer immediately to investigate and action as appropriate.

#### Educational and promotional Activities

- Promote responsible pet ownership to new and existing dog owners.
- Promote the benefits of dog training, socialisation and frequent exercise.
- Promote the various resources available to encourage the correct selection of a new pet such as 'Select a Pet' website.

- Provide a range of pamphlets that raise awareness of the risk of dog attacks in the home, on the street and in parks which include information on how to reduce risks.
- Distribute brochures to residents when requested and when investigating complaints.
- Promotion of the need for dogs to be under effective control, at all times, including the need to ensure dogs can be effectively contained and/or fenced on their own property to ensure they cannot escape.
- Promote desexing of dogs to reduce aggressive tendencies and wandering at large.
- Promote the need for supervision of children when dogs are present.
- Promote Council's emergency 24 hour 7 day a week service for reporting a dog attack.

#### Compliance Activities

- Declaring of all identified dangerous/menacing dogs in line with the Domestic Animals Act 1994.
- Respond to all reported dog attacks immediately as the top priority for Local Laws Officers.
- Record all reported dog attacks in Council's record management systems.
- Ensure all reported dog attacks are thoroughly investigated with findings and evidence accurately recorded and maintained.
- Ensure owners of declared dogs are fully informed of their requirements under the Act.
- Be proactive in declaring dogs dangerous or menacing.
- Ensure unclaimed dogs at the pound are temperament tested to determine whether they are suitable for re-housing.
- Seize dogs involved in serious attacks.
- Providing an emergency 24 hour 7 day a week service to report a dog attack.
- Conduct regular patrols at locations where there is a high incidence of wandering dogs.

## **5.8 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs**

Towong Shire Council Local Laws Officer investigates all reports or complaints regarding dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs, immediately.

Local Laws Officers currently use the Department of Primary Industry 'Standard for Restricted Breed Dogs in Victoria' to identify restricted breeds. In the instance that a dangerous dog be declared it is not permitted to remain within the boundaries of the Towong Shire.

#### Council orders

Towong Shire Council currently utilises the Domestic Animals Act 1994 in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

Reports of suspected undeclared restricted breed dogs are rare in Towong Shire. Officers believe there is a high level of compliance regarding the ownership and management of declared dogs within the municipality.

#### Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Media releases in local papers from Council and the Bureau of Animal Welfare.
- Information pamphlets at all Council service centre's and libraries.
- Information available on council's website.
- Ensuring all owners of declared dogs are aware of their obligations under the Act regarding identification and the keeping of these dogs.
- Promotion of new regulations for restricted breed dogs.

- Promote the 'Dangerous Dogs Hotline' 1300 101 080 on Council's website.

#### Compliance Activities

- Ensure that all Declared Dangerous, menacing and Restricted Breed dogs are registered accurately with the Victorian Declared Dog registry
- Inspect commercial and industrial areas to identify guard dogs guarding non residential properties
- Attending properties unannounced to conduct on the spot inspections and annual audits where there are registered dog complaints.
- Follow up non-compliance issues a found during inspections and audits.
- Review all dog attack cases to determine if it is appropriate to declare the dog dangerous or menacing
- Maintain a register of all declared dogs registered and housed in Towong Shire.
- Seize unregistered, suspected Restricted Breed dogs.
- Complete investigations of complaints of these types of dog breeds.

## **5.9 Over Population and Euthanasia**

Council has in place an agreement with Wodonga Dog Rescue to re-house dogs and cats that have ended up in the pound through local a local animal re-housing organization.

#### Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Promote responsible pet ownership to new and existing dog owners.
- Promote the benefits of dog training, socialisation and frequent exercise.
- Promote the various resources available to encourage the correct selection of a new pet such as 'Select a Pet' website.
- Promote Council's cat curfew.
- Promote the benefits of desexing; such as no surprise litters, fewer unwanted animals in the community, fewer euthanised animals, reduced aggression and reduced wandering, via local newspaper articles and on Council's website and Facebook.
- Offer dogs and cats for adoption through Wodonga Dog Rescue, which includes desexing and micro chipping costs.

#### Compliance Activities

- Investigating complaints and reports of numbers of dogs/cats on residential properties.
- Provide cat cages to residents for containing trespassing cats as requested.
- Investigate reports of animal hoarding and work with owners to reduce these to permitted numbers.
- Continue to use the services of Wodonga City Council pound.
- Investigate reports of unauthorised 'backyard breeders' to ascertain whether they should be registered as a domestic animal business.
- Where identified facilitate cat trapping programs.
- Promote responsible animal ownership and care through Councils website, newsletters and Facebook page.



## 5.10 Domestic animal businesses

Towong Shire Council currently has no Domestic Animal Businesses. In the instance of a Domestic Animal Business being present they will be issued with registration renewal notices each year and Council will conduct annual inspections in relation to their compliance with relevant codes of practices.

Council provides all registered Domestic Animal Businesses with any changes to the legislation or Code of Practice information relevant to the business and encourages business owners to be involved in any review of the mandatory Code of Practice.

### Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Provide relevant mandatory Code of Practice to proprietors of existing and proposed domestic animal businesses.
- Ensure all relevant Domestic Animal Businesses are advised and involved in any review of the mandatory Code of Practice for their type of business.
- Sponsors an annual seminar for all registered Animal Businesses to network and remain relevant in relation to changes in legislation. Invite Domestic Animal Businesses to be involved in Council's animal related community events.

### Compliance Activities

- Conduct web, 'Yellow Pages', newspaper, Dogzonline.com.au, etc, searches to ascertain whether there are unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses within the municipality.
- Conduct annual (or more frequent) 'unscheduled' inspections/audits of each Domestic Animal Business premises to determine compliance with the Act, relevant mandatory Code of Practice, and any terms, conditions, limitations or restrictions on that registration.
- Use audit documents on Bureau of Animal Welfare's Animal Management website.
- Follow-up Domestic Animal Business non-compliance issues with information on required actions and timeframe for resolution, further inspections, and prosecutions where necessary.
- In the case of serious non-compliance issues, suspend or cancel registration.
- Check local newspapers to ensure Domestic Animal Business registration numbers and name of Council that issued that number are included in cat and dog 'for sale' advertisements.
- Liaise with other units within Council to provide advice when planning applications for Domestic Animal Businesses are received, to ensure appropriate conditions are placed on construction, operation, etc.
- Offer a Domestic Animal Business kit to send to people making queries about setting up a Domestic Animal Business, to let them know of all the requirements involved, before they start making too many plans.

## 6. Customer satisfaction survey and levels of service

It is intended that every second year customer satisfaction surveys will be conducted of registered pet owners and the general public to help inform and prioritise the focus of the Local Laws Officer work within domestic animal management

Program Service	Service Level
Identification and registration of dogs and cats	93% of registrations received by 1 June each year
Identification and registration – door knock campaigns	Conducted on a yearly cycle
Domestic animal complaint	Response within immediate response according to urgency to 2 days
Dangerous dogs complaint	Response within 2 hours or less
Routine street patrols	Conducted daily
Pound open	38 hours per week
After hours emergency response	24 hours a day, 365 days a year
Domestic animal business	Inspected and registered every year
School information sessions	The Bureau of Animal Welfare

## 7. Four Year Action Plan

### 7.1 Training of Authorised Officers

To ensure all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work safely, efficiently and effectively.

Action	Measure	Outcome	Who	Frequency	
1	Continue to update work plan including training requirements for local law officer to ensure staff are kept informed of and trained in changes to relevant legislation, policies, processes and procedures in a timely manner.	Work plan completed, reviews ongoing Changes to legislation, policies, processes and procedures to be highlighted on the Local Laws Intranet;	Clarity of role and objectives. Confident and informed staff responding to customers; increased customer confidence that enquiry will be successfully dealt with.	DTS, Local law Officer	Create annually before 1 Oct 2014, Review 3 monthly
2	Review in consultation with staff training requirements for all Authorised officers undertaking animal management duties	Consultation with relevant staff occurred; agreed list of skills required to undertake animal management duties developed.	Confident, skilled and knowledgeable staff responding to customers; increased customer confidence that enquiry will be successfully dealt with.	DTS, Local law Officer	Annually
3	Maintain a training register/skills matrix with OH&S officer	Central training register developed and maintained.	Confident, skilled and knowledgeable staff responding to customers; increased customer confidence that enquiry will be successfully dealt with.	OH&S Officer	Ongoing
4	Regularly assess Officers skills, compliance and knowledge of policies, processes and procedures.	Annual skills and knowledge assessments undertaken for each Officer.	Confident and informed staff responding to customers; increased customer confidence that enquiry will be successfully dealt with.	DTS, Local law Officer	Annual

## 7.2 Registration and Identification

To maximize the number of registered and identifiable domestic animals residing within Towong Shire to aid compliance and facilitate reuniting lost pets with their owners in a timely manner.

Action	Measure	Outcome	Who	Frequency
5	Continue to annually cross check microchip registries to identify micro chipped animals within Towong Shire that are not registered	Cross check undertaken and contact made with owners when discrepancies are identified	Improved accuracy of Council's pet registration data base and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Annually
6	Continue to send out registration reminder notices to pet owners who have failed to re register their pets by 10 April each year	Reminder notices sent for previously registered animals that have not been renewed	Less reminder notices sent out as pet owners become proactive in their annual registration	Ranger 31 May each year
7	Facilitate discount micro chipping sessions prior to April each year	Annual discount micro chipping session held	Higher % of micro chipped and registered animals	Ranger Annually
8	Continue to ensure that all seized and impounded animals are registered prior to release to their owner	More registered animals	Improved accuracy of Council's pet registration data base and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Ongoing
9	Undertake annual random neighborhood door knocks to check for unregistered dogs and cats	Increased number of neighborhood door knocks across the Shire	Improved accuracy of Council's pet registration data base and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Annually

### 7.3 Animal Nuisance Complaints

Minimise the number of complaints received by Council while increasing community satisfaction with Council's response to investigating complaints.

Action		Measure	Outcome	Who	Frequency
10	Provide educational materials to pet owners.	Sourcing, preparation and distribution of educational materials	Greater community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in complaints and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Communications Officer	Ongoing
11	Maintain an appropriate supply of cat cages for hire to meet community demand	Maintain a waiting period of no longer than seven working days	Reduction in feral cat population and complaints	Ranger	Ongoing
12	Maintain accurate and relevant information on Council's website about how to make a complaint	Dedicated page on animal complaints to be developed and regularly checked for accuracy	Greater community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in complaints; increased access to Council Services; an enhanced customer service and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Communications Officer CARS	Bi-annually
13	Further refine the CARS system and implement Iform builder app for incident and inspection reporting to facilitate timely resolutions	Process implemented	Increased access to Council services and an enhanced level of customer service	Ranger Civil/Asset Engineer	2014
14	Update and distribute barking dog information packs to provide complainants and owners of alleged barking dogs to assist in timely resolution of complaints	Information packs updated and available for distribution	Greater community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in complaints and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Customer Liaison Officer	2014

## 7.4 Dog attacks

Action		Measure	Outcome	Who	Frequency
15	Continue to action dog attack investigation and enforcement procedures	Procedure developed and implemented	Confident, skilled and knowledgeable staff responding to customers; consistency in response provided; increased customer confidence and enhanced level of customer service	Ranger	Ongoing
16	Conduct an education campaign for farmers regarding their responsibilities when owning working dogs	Annual education program developed and delivered	Greater community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in complaints and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger	Annually
17	Maintain accurate and relevant information on Council's website about how to report a dog attack	Dedicated page on dog attacks to be developed and regularly checked for accuracy	Greater community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in complaints; increased access to Council Services and greater adherence to legislation	Communications Officer Ranger	6 monthly
18	Increase public understanding and awareness of what dog attack, dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs means and how to report it through media articles and brochures	Number of media articles sent to local media; brochure developed and number of brochures distributed	Greater community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in complaints and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Communication Officer	Ongoing
19	Promote a greater awareness of the consequences for owners and their	Number of media articles sent to local/social media and	Greater community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in	Ranger Communication Officer	2014/15

	dogs should their dog rush at or attack a person or animal	information on Council website	complaints and greater adherence to legislation		
<b>21</b>	Continue to use CARS to document incidents where animals are reported, or found, to have attacked people, pets, wildlife and livestock	Accurate and current details recorded	Improved accuracy of Council's pet registration database and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger Customer Liaison Officer	Ongoing

### 7.5 Dangerous, menacing and restricted dog breeds

Action	Measure	Outcome	Who	Frequency	
<b>22</b>	Continue to use CARS to document complaints and follow procedures to facilitate timely resolutions	Timely resolution of complaints	Increased access to Council services and an enhanced level of customer service	Ranger Customer Service Officers	Ongoing
<b>23</b>	Place links and phone numbers on Council website to promote the 'Dangerous Dogs Hotline'	Links and phone numbers placed on website	Greater community awareness and reporting	Ranger Communications Officer	2014
<b>24</b>	Ensure all declared menacing, dangerous and restricted breed dogs are entered into the Victorian Declared Dog Registry	All declared menacing, dangerous and restricted breed dogs entered into the Victorian Declared Dog Registry within seven days of declaration	Improved accuracy of Council's pet registration database and greater adherence to legislation	Ranger	Ongoing
<b>25</b>	Audit properties where there are registered declared dogs.	Annual audits performed and recorded	More accurate database and monitoring of declared dogs	Ranger	Annually

## 8. Annual Review and Reporting

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Actions identified in this Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013-2017 will commence in the 2013/2014 financial year and conclude at the end of the 2016/2017 financial year.

Towong Shire Council will review the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013-2017 annually and, if appropriate, amend. Any amendment of the Plan will be provided to the Department of Primary Industries' Secretary. An evaluation of our implementation of the Plan will be published in Towong Shire Council's Annual Report.

A full review of this Plan will be undertaken during the 2016/2017 financial year and will inform the development of any future Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Any questions relating to this Plan should be directed to the Local Laws Officer 02 60715100; or via email at [info@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@towong.vic.gov.au); or via post to Towong Shire Council, PO Box 55, Tallangatta, Victoria 3700.

To obtain this information in languages other than English, or in other formats including audio, electronic, Braille or large print, please contact Towong Shire Council on 02 60715100.



## **Appendices**