

5.4. COMPLETION OF APPROVED INSPECTION PROGRAM - DOG REGISTRATION

REPORT AUTHOR Sara Roberts, Coordinator Environmental Health and Local Laws

MANAGER Paul Hoyer, Manager Environment and Planning

DEPARTMENT Environment and Planning

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the report completing the Approved Inspection Program for dog registration, conducted in the 2021-2022 financial year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 31 August 2021, Council voted unanimously to implement an Approved Inspection Program for dog registration, as provided in the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008*.

Door to door inspections commenced in September 2021 and were completed in March 2022. Inspections were conducted from Degarra to Wangetti and properties where Council records indicated there was no dog currently registered were included.

BACKGROUND

The *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* provides the power for Local Governments to conduct Approved Inspection Programs. Programs can either be selective (contained to certain areas or suburbs) or systematic (the entire Shire area).

The last dog registration audit occurred in Douglas Shire when the area was governed by Cairns Regional Council.

COMMENTS

The program resulted in 573 Notices issued to owners. As a result, 919 new dog registrations have been received and, in addition, 526 dog registrations were renewed. See below a breakdown of the new registrations by type and total revenue:

Table 1.

Description	Total	Revenue
Desexed Dog	462	\$12,474
Entire Dog	164	\$16,728
Puppy Registration	128	Free
Pensioner Desexed	28	\$756
Pensioner Entire	46	\$3,220
Rural Dog	26	\$312
Special Concession	49	Free
Transfer of registration	16	Free
Total	919	\$33,490

To date, 48 Penalty Infringement Notices (fines) have been issued to owners who have failed to register dogs in their care. Fines were not issued until the end of the program, resulting in owners having a significant period to obtain registration. The total revenue for this is approx. \$13,200.

Anyone who requested an extension or additional assistance, received this. Officers assisted residents with obtaining microchip numbers and confirming desexing, where owners could not provide paperwork to confirm this.

While dog registration is a legal requirement under the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act*, additionally by capturing these registrations, Council staff can better manage issues and complaints and have greater insight when planning education or pro-active activities.

With an additional 1,445 dogs registered in the Douglas Shire, the program has proved to be a resounding success. As such, Council may wish to consider the merit of conducting future approved inspection programs on a more regular basis.

PROPOSAL

That Council notes the report completing the Approved Inspection Program for dog registration, conducted in the 2021-2022 financial year.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The program was undertaken by local laws officers in addition to their day-to-day activities. This can, at times, have an impact on service levels and it may be necessary with future programs to budget for additional resources.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Council has an obligation and delegated authority under the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* to ensure dogs are registered in the Douglas Shire. The approved inspection program confirms that Council is meeting this obligation.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Dog registration revenue assists Council in implementing strategic programs that target responsible pet ownership and enforce compliance.

Environmental: The Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment states that a wide variety of native animals, including lizards, birds and bandicoots are at risk from domestic pets in urban areas. One of their recommended actions to reduce the risk is to ensure that dogs are kept under control. Registration assists Council officers in managing these risks by highlighting the number of animals in a particular area.

Social: In the current financial year, Council officers have investigated approximately 300 complaints relating to dog nuisance and aggressive behavior, including 36 dog attacks. Dog registration assists officers to identify potential targets for enquiry, which results in faster resolution to issues.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

Douglas Shire Council embraces the diversity of our communities and values the contribution that all people make to the Shire. We recognise that it is a core strength of the region. We acknowledge our past so that it may guide us in the future. We recognise the wrongs done to our Indigenous community and we actively seek to reconcile so that we may all benefit from and enjoy our Shire. We acknowledge early European settlers who forged an agricultural base for our economy and we welcome all new arrivals as part of our broader community.

Goal 2 - We will deliver programs and services that protect and enhance the liveability of our beautiful Shire.

Operational Plan 2021-2022 Actions:

1.2.6 - Review and audit the dog registration program.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Regulator	Council has a number of statutory obligations detailed in numerous regulations and legislative Acts. Council also makes local laws to ensure that the Shire is well governed. In fulfilling its role as regulator, Council will utilise an outcomes based approach that balances the needs of the community with social and natural justice.
------------------	--

CONSULTATION

Internal: Nil

External: Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Nil