

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

2027 – 2030



Introduction

WHAT

The [Litchfield Council Animal Management Strategy and Action Plan 2027 – 2030](#) guides Council and the community on the delivery of animal management, information and education services. It focuses on public safety, community amenity and responsible dog ownership.

The Strategy will provide a framework to:

- 1 Promote public safety and protect domestic animals by addressing unsafe or nuisance dog behaviour and providing guidance on other animal management matters.
- 2 Promote and encourage responsible dog ownership.
- 3 Effectively manage dogs and enforce Council's Dog Management By-Laws.

WHY

Dogs are an important part of many people's lives and are often valued members of the family, contributing positively to physical and mental wellbeing.

This Strategy supports community safety and amenity through effective communication, education and enforcement of the *Litchfield Council (Dog Management) By-Laws 2017*. It contributes to Council's vision of being **"the best place to live in the Top End"** for dog owners and non-dog owners alike.

Council's management of other animals is limited to providing advice and referrals to the appropriate agencies.

WHO

Council's Regulatory Services team is responsible for delivering the Animal Management Strategy and Action Plan. The team consists of a Supervisor, Senior Ranger, two Rangers and a Business Support Officer.

The team provides animal management services across the Litchfield municipality, including community education, dog registration, ranger patrols, complaint investigation, enforcement of Council's Dog Management By-laws, management of declared dangerous dogs and operation of Council's dog impound facility.

The team works with dog owners, residents, veterinary clinics, rehoming organisations and other relevant agencies to promote responsible dog ownership and support community safety and amenity.



HOW

Communicate

- Promote Council's Regulatory Services and animal management responsibilities to the community.
- Strengthen relationships with animal rehoming organisations, veterinary clinics and other relevant organisations.

Educate

- Deliver free, age-appropriate school education programs on dog safety and responsible dog ownership.
- Maintain up to date ranger skills and training in dog behaviour and handling, regulatory practices, technology and customer service. All rangers will hold, or work towards, a minimum Certificate IV in Government Investigations and maintain the qualifications, licences and authorisations required for the role, including first aid, firearms and Schedule 4 medication authorisations.
- Provide information and referrals for issues involving other animals, including cats, poultry and livestock.

Investigate

- Investigate dog related complaints in accordance with Council's Dog Management By-laws, policies and procedures, prioritising dog attacks and menacing behaviour.
- Conduct regular ranger patrols throughout the municipality to respond to and contain wandering dogs.
- Conduct property and fence inspections for dogs involved in repeated or serious incidents, declared dangerous dogs, and dog licence applications.
- Manage and enforce dog number limits within the Asche Dog Restriction Area to support community safety and amenity.

Regulate

- Encourage voluntary compliance with Council's Dog Management By-Laws.
- Apply consistent and proportionate enforcement action in response to non-compliance and repeated breaches, in accordance with Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy.
- Maintain a register of declared dangerous dogs and conduct regular compliance inspections to ensure all declaration conditions are being met.
- Provide accessible dog registration options, including mobile EFTPOS facilities in the field and registration events held after hours twice a year.
- Operate Council's dog impound facility for dogs that cannot be returned to their owners or must be held while an investigation is completed.

Objectives

Council works with the community to promote responsible dog ownership and encourage voluntary compliance. When required, Council applies consistent and proportionate enforcement action in accordance with the Litchfield Council (*Dog Management*) By-Laws 2017, relevant legislation, and Council policies and procedures.

Council's role in relation to animals other than dogs is generally limited to providing information and referrals to the appropriate agencies.

This Strategy has the following objectives:

- 1 Protect public safety and community amenity through effective dog management.
- 2 Promote responsible dog ownership through communication, education and community engagement.
- 3 Increase compliance with requirements for dogs to be microchipped, registered and securely contained on their property.
- 4 Provide accessible dog safety and responsible dog ownership education for schools, dog owners and the broader community.
- 5 Respond to and investigate dog related complaints in a timely, consistent and risk-based manner, prioritising dog attacks and menacing behaviour.
- 6 Encourage voluntary compliance and apply consistent and proportionate enforcement action when required.
- 7 Support the safe and accountable management of impounded and declared dangerous dogs.
- 8 Manage and enforce dog ownership limits within the Asche Dog Restriction Area.
- 9 Support the community by providing clear information and referrals for matters involving animals outside Council's dog management responsibilities, including cats, poultry, livestock and wildlife.

OBJECTIVE 1

Protect public safety and community amenity through effective dog management.



What we will do

- Prioritise responses to dog attacks, menacing behaviour and other high-risk incidents.
- Conduct proactive patrols and take appropriate action to address wandering dogs and other breaches.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Reduce risks caused by wandering, menacing and attacking dogs	• Apply a risk-based approach to complaints. • Prioritise attacks and menacing behaviour. • Conduct targeted and routine ranger patrols. • Inspect properties and fencing following repeated or serious incidents. • Provide advice to owners about containment and responsible dog management.	• Priority incidents attended within Council's service standards. • Fewer repeated wandering dog complaints. • Reduction in repeated dog attack and menacing incidents. • Increased compliance following ranger intervention. • Patrol activities and outcomes recorded and reported.

OBJECTIVE 2

Promote responsible dog ownership through communication, education and community engagement.



What we will do

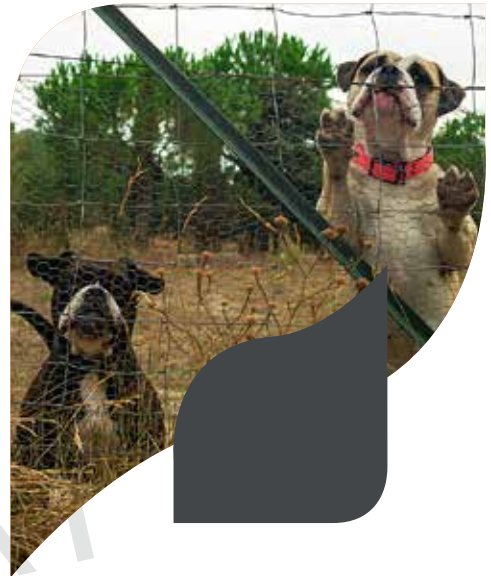
- Provide clear and accessible information about responsible dog ownership.
- Engage with dog owners through Council communications, events and direct contact with rangers.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Build community awareness of responsible dog ownership and owners' legal responsibilities.	• Publish information through Council's website, social media and other communication channels. • Promote registration, microchipping, desexing, effective containment and appropriate control in public places. • Provide practical advice during ranger interactions. • Promote available registration and desexing initiatives.	• Regular animal management information published. • Increased community engagement with educational content. • Increased registration and microchipping compliance. • Increased uptake of Council initiatives. • Fewer preventable or repeated complaints.

OBJECTIVE 3

Increase compliance with requirements for dogs to be microchipped, registered and securely contained on their property.



What we will do

- Make registration and microchipping services accessible to the community.
- Identify and address unregistered, unidentified and inadequately contained dogs.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Improve dog identification, registration and containment across the municipality.	• Conduct registration renewal and overdue registration campaigns. • Offer mobile EFTPOS registration services in the field. • Hold twice yearly after-hours registration events. • Provide free microchipping with initial registration, subject to Council's approved program. • Conduct property and containment inspections where required. • Apply proportionate enforcement action for continued non-compliance. • Offer desexing vouchers to eligible owners of dogs registered with Council.	• Increased number of registered and microchipped dogs. • Increased registration renewal rate. • Number of registrations completed in the field and at after-hours events. • Increased compliance following notices or education. • Fewer unidentified dogs entering the pound. • Fewer repeat wandering dog incidents. • Number of desexing vouchers issued and redeemed. • Increased percentage of registered dogs that are desexed.

OBJECTIVE 4

Provide accessible dog safety and responsible dog ownership education for schools, dog owners and the broader community.



What we will do

- Deliver free, age appropriate school education programs.
- Provide practical dog safety and responsible ownership information to the community.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Improve community knowledge of safe interactions with dogs and responsible dog ownership.	• Offer free education programs to schools within the municipality. • Tailor program content to the students' ages and learning needs. • Provide information at community events and through Council communication channels. • Provide resources covering dog safety, registration, containment, desexing and behaviour. • Review education materials to ensure they remain current. • Partner with local dog trainers to provide free public education sessions on dog behaviour, training and responsible dog ownership.	• A minimum of six school education sessions delivered each financial year, subject to school participation. • Number of students and community members reached. • Positive feedback from participating schools. • Education resources reviewed regularly. • Increased community awareness of safe behaviour around dogs. • At least one free public education session delivered by a local dog trainer each year, subject to trainer availability and community participation.

OBJECTIVE 5

Respond to and investigate dog related complaints in a timely, consistent and risk-based manner, prioritising dog attacks and menacing behaviour.



What we will do

- Conduct fair, thorough and timely investigations.
- Maintain consistent investigation practices supported by appropriately qualified rangers.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Deliver consistent, evidence based and procedurally fair investigations.	• Assess and prioritise complaints according to risk. • Gather and record relevant evidence. • Keep affected parties appropriately informed. • Review investigations before significant enforcement decisions are made. • Require all rangers to hold, or work towards, a minimum Certificate IV in Government Investigations. • Maintain the rangers' qualifications, licences and authorisations required for the role, including first aid, firearms and Schedule 4 medication authorisations.	• Priority complaints attended within Council's service standards. • Investigations completed within appropriate timeframes. • Investigation records meet Council requirements. • Enforcement decisions are supported by sufficient evidence. • All rangers meet or are progressing towards required qualifications. • Fewer decisions overturned because of procedural or evidentiary deficiencies.

OBJECTIVE 6

Encourage voluntary compliance and apply consistent and proportionate enforcement action when required.



What we will do

- Help dog owners understand and meet their responsibilities.
- Escalate enforcement action when education and voluntary compliance are unsuccessful or where the seriousness of an incident requires immediate action.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Achieve compliance using fair, consistent and proportionate regulatory action.	• Provide education, advice and opportunities to remedy non-compliance where appropriate. • Apply Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy. • Consider risk, seriousness, evidence and compliance history when determining action. • Use notices, infringements, declarations and prosecution where authorised and appropriate. • Document enforcement decisions and reasons.	• Increased compliance following education or formal notices. • Enforcement decisions are consistent with Council policy. • Reduced repeat offending. • Decisions and reasons are appropriately documented. • Regulatory action withstands internal and external review.

OBJECTIVE 7

Support the safe and accountable management of impounded and declared dangerous dogs.



What we will do

- Operate Council's dog impound facility safely and responsibly.
- Maintain oversight of declared dangerous dogs and compliance with declaration conditions.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Ensure impounded and declared dangerous dogs are managed in accordance with Council requirements.	• Scan dogs for microchips and attempt to identify and contact owners. • Return dogs directly to their owners where safe and appropriate. • Maintain accurate impound records. • Work with approved rehoming organisations and veterinary clinics. • Maintain a register of declared dangerous dogs. • Conduct regular compliance inspections for declared dangerous dogs. • Take action when declaration conditions are not met.	• Increased number of dogs returned to their owners. • Accurate and complete impound records. • Reduced average length of stay where appropriate. • Regular dangerous dog inspections completed and recorded. • Increased compliance with dangerous dog declaration conditions.

OBJECTIVE 8

Manage and enforce dog ownership limits within the Asche Dog Restriction Area.



What we will do

- Inform Asche residents about dog ownership limits and licence requirements.
- Assess dog licence applications and monitor compliance within the Asche Dog Restriction Area.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Support safety and amenity within Asche through the effective administration of the Dog Restriction Area.	• Communicate the two dog limit and dog licence requirements. • Assess applications to keep three or four dogs. • Conduct property and fence inspections as part of the application process. • Maintain accurate licence and registration records. • Conduct compliance checks and respond to reported breaches. • Apply appropriate action when dog limits or licence conditions are not met.	• Residents provided with clear information. • Licence applications assessed within established timeframes. • Required property inspections completed and recorded. • Accurate register of licences maintained. • Increased compliance with dog number limits and licence conditions. • Fewer repeated complaints relating to excessive dog numbers.

OBJECTIVE 9

Support the community by providing clear information and referrals for matters involving animals outside Council's dog management responsibilities.



What we will do

- Explain Council's responsibilities and limitations regarding animals other than dogs.
- Connect customers to the agency or organisation responsible for their concern.

Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
• Help community members identify the appropriate pathway for concerns involving cats, poultry, livestock and other animals.	• Provide consistent information about Council's role. • Maintain current referral information for relevant government agencies and organisations. • Publish information on Council's website. • Refer animal welfare, livestock, wildlife and other matters to the appropriate authority. • Record matters requiring Council action under other applicable legislation. • Offer cat and dog traps for hire to residents, subject to availability and Council's conditions of use.	• Current referral information is readily available. • Website information is reviewed regularly. • Enquiries are referred to the correct agency where possible. • Consistent advice is provided by Council staff. • Fewer complaints are incorrectly lodged as dog management matters. • Cat and dog traps are available for residents to hire when required

Monitoring and reporting

Progress against the Animal Management Strategy and Action Plan will be monitored through Council's regular operational reporting processes. Outcomes against the identified actions and success measures will be reviewed annually.

Actions and success measures may be updated where necessary to respond to legislative changes, operational requirements, available resources and changing community needs.



DRAFT



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