

Companion Animal Management Plan

Hurstville City Council

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Introduction

Companion animals play a large role in the Australian culture with close to 4 million dogs and cats owned as pets in households across the country (Bureau of statistics, 2002). As companion animals are so widely represented in Australia, the NSW Government has implemented a Companion Animals Act 1998 (The Act). The Act defines companion animals as a dog, a cat, and any other animal that is prescribed by the regulations as a companion animal. All dogs are treated as companion animals such as working dogs on rural properties, guard dogs and police dogs (Companion Animals Act, 1998). Companion animal numbers in NSW and around Australia are continually increasing, so the need for a management plan is essential in ensuring that companion animals and the community can live in harmony.

Aims & Objectives

The aims for Hurstville City's Companion Animal Management Plan are to promote responsible pet ownership and to educate and inform the Hurstville community of their responsibilities in owning a companion animal. The objectives are:

- To ensure Hurstville Council meets its obligations under the Companion Animals Act 1998
- To promote awareness of the requirements with respect to the ownership of companion animals under the Companion Animals Act 1998
- To take appropriate steps to ensure the notification of the existence of all dangerous and restricted dogs that are ordinarily kept within its area.
- To identify current companion animal issues within Hurstville Municipality and to act appropriately to eliminate or minimize its effect
- To examine possible alternatives to obtain ongoing & successful companion animal management
- To establish achievable goals for successful companion animal management through the means of an action plan

The Companion Animals Act 1998 and Management

The Companion Animal Act 1998 (the Act) was introduced to replace The Dog Act 1966. The Act identifies key issues such as the responsibilities for the identification and registration of companion animals and for the duties and responsibilities of companion animal owners. Local councils are the authority responsible for implementing the Act. Councils also have the responsibility of planning, service provision, community education and enforcement. A companion animal management plan (CAMP) is a method used to set out strategies for the management of companion animals. It is to address and incorporate council's general management plans, local environment plans and local order policies.

Hurstville City Council Local Orders Policy on the Keeping of Animals

Hurstville City Council adopted a Local Orders Policy on the Keeping of Animals. This policy aims to inform Hurstville residents of the Council's regulatory powers concerning the keeping of animals within the city.

The policy seeks to inform the reasonable limits which apply concerning the maximum number of animals and the circumstances under which they may be kept on premises in an urban environment. It is a guideline for residents so that they can understand the acceptable limits for the numbers of animals they may keep on their property.

The policy seeks to minimise local nuisance and maximise residential amenity, and to ensure that the keeping of animals does not compromise minimum standards of public health, safety and convenience. It contains a Table of Requirements which sets out the essential conditions regarding the keeping of animals.

The keeping of Animals policy can be viewed at www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au, under the following sections

- About Council
- Policy & Codes

- Category (Animals)

The Benefits of Pet Ownership

Companion animals are believed to provide many benefits to human health. Companion animals are shown to:

- reduce stress
- promote feelings of reverie and comfort
- enhance longevity and physical health

Companion animals also provide:

- companionship
- love
- humour
- play
- exercise
- a sense of power
- outlets for displacement
- projection
- nurturance

Policy Statement for Companion Animal Management

Hurstville City Council

Responsible Pet Ownership

Hurstville City Council believes responsible pet ownership to be extremely important and the key objective to a successful, healthy and harmonious relationship between companion animals, communities and the environment.

A responsible pet owner ensures their companion animals are:

- Healthy
- Well nourished
- Groomed
- Vaccinated
- Properly exercised and socialized
- Happy and content

A responsible pet owner should also ensure that their companion animal:

- Does not harm or threaten any other person or animal
- Is able to be contain your dog on your property
- When in public is kept on a leash (except for leash free areas)
- Is not causing a nuisance
- Is permanently registered and micro-chipped
- If a restricted dog breed or dog declared dangerous, understand they have more stringent responsibilities (please see Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 21, 34 & 51)

Education and Training

There are many education and training packages available to the public for responsible pet ownership. Current programs and details are listed below:

- **Australian Canine Good Citizen:** www.deltasocietyaustralia.com.au
An education program designed to produce well-behaved dogs and responsible owners.
- **Pet Pep:** www.ava.com.au/petpep/
It aims to educate primary school students on the importance of animal welfare and responsible pet ownership.
- **Puppy Preschool:**
Helps puppies to be sociable and well behaved. Encourages responsible ownership and welfare, whilst ensuring the proper development of the dog.
- **Selectapet:** www.petnet.com/au/selectapet/selectapet.html
A computer based program to help match breed choice with personal lifestyle characteristics.

Companion Animal Management Funding

The Local Government Act offers Council the opportunity to apply for a special Animal Management Levy to help fund animal management enforcement and education. These activities cannot be funded out of animal registrations and infringements alone. The levy would apply to all rateable properties within Hurstville LGA so as to ensure all residents benefit for local animal management, not just pet owners.

Penalty Units

Penalty units refer to fines that may be inflicted as a result of irresponsible pet ownership. Each individual penalty unit equates to the amount of \$110 i.e. 8 penalty units = \$880.

Compulsory identification and registration of companion animals

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Sections 8 & 9)

Under the Companion Animals Act 1998 all dogs and cats born or who have changed owners since the 1 July 1999 are required to be microchipped and lifetime registered.

Companion animals must be microchipped and identified from 12 weeks of age along with lifetime registration being completed by the time the animal is 6 months old.

The current fee structure for lifetime registration is:

Entire (undesexed) cat or dog	\$150
Entire cat or dog owned by a registered breeder	\$40
Desexed cat or dog	\$40
Desexed cat or dog owned by a pensioner	\$15
Assistant dogs	Free

Identification and registration of companion animals help to reduce the number of lost or stray cats and dogs, along with allowing communication between pet owners and councils. When animals are registered under the Companion Animals Act, they are provided with the protection and regulation that the NSW government and the local council provide.

Unregistered companion animal

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 10A)

The owner of an unregistered companion animal that is required to be registered is guilty of an offence on each occasion the animal is in a place other than where it is ordinarily kept.

Maximum penalty:

- 3 penalty units except in the case of a dangerous or restricted dog, or
- 13 penalty units in the case of a dangerous or restricted dog.

Dog to wear collar and tag

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 12)

As part of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (Part 3, Division 1, Section 12), it is the duty of the owner to ensure that their dog wears a collar around its neck along with an attached tag that identifies the dogs name and the address or telephone number of the owner of the dog.

Maximum 8 penalty units.

50 Penalty units in the case or dangerous or restricted dogs

Cats must have form of identification

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Part 4 Section 29)

A cat must be identified by a form of identification that enables a local authority to ascertain the name of the cat and the address or telephone number of the owner of the cat.

The identification may take any of the following forms:

- A collar worn around the cat's neck with a tag or tags attached
- A microchip
- Any other form of identification prescribed by the regulations.

The owner of the cat is guilty of an offence if this section is not complied with.

Maximum penalty: 8 penalty units.

Responsibilities for control of dogs

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Part 3, Division 1)

Preventing dog from escaping

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 12A)

It is important that owners of dogs must take necessary precautions to prevent their dogs from escaping from the property in which they are kept. Reasons for this are to ensure the safety of the public, the dog and the general biodiversity.

The owner of the dog is guilty of an offence if this section is not complied with.

Maximum penalty: 8 penalty units.

50 Penalty units in the case of dangerous or restricted dogs

Off-Leash Areas

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 13)

As part of Hurstville City Council's responsibilities under the Companion Animals Act 1998, there must at all times be at least one public place in any Local Government Area that is an off-leash area. Declaring a park to be off-leash can be limited so as to apply during particular period or periods of the day or to different periods of different days.

Hurstville council has provided two leash free areas where dogs are permitted to be off leash 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The current off leash areas authorized by Hurstville City Council are:

1. Lower Gannons Park, Peakhurst.

Accessed from either Robyn Street, Peakhurst or Upper Gannons Park off Forest Road Peakhurst

2. Riverwood Park — Western end of Coleridge Street Riverwood
William Road, Riverwood

***Public Places where Dogs would be Excluded
(Companion Animals Act, Section 14)***

Under the Companion Animals Act dogs are prohibited in the following places (whether or not they are leashed or otherwise controlled):

- In or within 10 metres of children’s play areas
- Food preparation/consumption areas, unless it is a public thoroughfare (such as a road, footpath or pathway).
- Recreation areas where dogs are prohibited.
- Public bathing areas where dogs are prohibited.
- School grounds (unless with the permission of the person controlling the grounds).
- Child care centres (unless with the permission of the person controlling the centre).
- Shopping areas where dogs are prohibited (unless secured in a vehicle with the permission of the person controlling the place or going to and from the vet or pet shop).
- Wildlife protection areas.

Maximum penalty may occur if a dog is in a place in which dogs are prohibited.

Maximum penalties are:

- 10 penalty units except in the case of a dangerous or restricted dog, or
- 100 penalty units in the case of a dangerous or restricted dog.

Dogs Defecating in Public Places

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 20)

If a dog defecates in a public place, it is the responsibility of the owner, or if the owner is not present at the relevant time and another person who is of or above the age of 16 years is in charge of the dog at that time—that other person, must immediately remove the dog's faeces and properly dispose of them.

Maximum penalty is currently 8 penalty units.

This section does not apply when the dog is an assistance animal being used bona fide by a person with a disability to assist the person and the person's disability makes compliance by the person with this section not reasonably practicable.

Dog faeces can pose a health risks to humans. Many pathogens are present in dog droppings and can be spread to humans. Diseases such as parasites, protozoa and bacteria can be transmitted to both people and other animals. The illnesses that can arise from improper disposal of dog droppings most commonly occur in the intestinal tract with the spread of intestinal worms such as Hookworm and Roundworm.

Nuisance Dogs

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 21)

The NSW government (2000) defines nuisance animals as “the behaviour of some companion animals which are not responsibly owned, can represent a serious inconvenience and at times can be a danger to other members of the community.

A nuisance dog is described by the Act as:

- Is habitually at large,
- Makes a noise, by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises,

- Repeatedly defecates on another persons property,
- Repeatedly runs at or chases any person, animal or vehicle,
- Endangers the health of any person or animal, or
- Repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

Dangerous Dogs

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 34 & 51)

Under the Companion Animals Act a dog is considered dangerous if the following has occurred:

- Has without provocation, attacked or killed a person or animal,
- Has, without provocation, repeatedly threatened to attack or repeatedly chased a person or animal, or
- Has displayed unreasonable aggression towards a person or animal, or
- Is kept or used for the purposes of hunting.

Authorised officers of a council may declare a dog to be dangerous if satisfied that a dog is dangerous.

Restricted Dogs

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 55 and 56)

Under the Companion Animals Act the following dogs are restricted dogs:

- American pit bull terriers or pit bull terriers,
- Japanese Tosas,
- Argentinian fighting dogs,
- Brazilian fighting dogs,
- any other dog of a breed, kind or description whose importation into Australia is prohibited by or under the *Customs Act 1901* of the Commonwealth,

- any dog declared by an authorised officer of a council under Division 6 of this Part to be a restricted dog,
- any other dog of a breed, kind or description prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this section.

The owner of a restricted or a dangerous dog must comply with specific conditions including keeping the dog in a childproof enclosure. Please refer to the Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 56 for control requirements.

Responsibilities for control of cats

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Part 4)

Public Places where Cats would be Excluded

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 30)

Under the Companion Animals Act cats are prohibited in the following places:

- Food preparation/consumption areas, unless it is a public thoroughfare (such as a road, footpath or pathway).
- Wildlife protection areas.

Maximum penalty may occur if a cat is in a place in which cats are prohibited. Maximum penalties are:

- 8 penalty units.

Nuisance Cats

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 31)

A nuisance cat is described by the Act as:

- Makes a noise that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises, or
- Repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

If an authorised officer of a council is satisfied that a cat is a nuisance, the officer may, after complying with section 31A, issue an order in the approved form to the owner of the cat requiring the owner to prevent the behaviour that is alleged to constitute the nuisance.

Council Enforcement Powers

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Part 7A)

Powers of entry

(Companion Animals Act 1998, Section 69)

Local councils are the authority responsible for implementing the Companion Animals Act 1998. Council enforcement powers include the power to seize animals, to issue on the spot penalties, to issue nuisance orders and to declare dogs dangerous. Enforcement powers are given by councils to particular officers, known as authorised officers. These officers are usually Rangers or Animal Control Officers. Authorised officers have a range of powers to deal with breaches of the Act as they occur.

- The can require names and addresses of people who they reasonably suspect may have breached the Act.
- They are able to issue on the spot penalties for some offences, set by regulations, including breaches such as failing to dispose of dog faeces.
- Officers are empowered to seize an animal which is stray, or to prevent injury to a person or another animal or damage to property. Seized animals must be delivered to their owner or to a council pound if the owner cannot be identified.
- Under very limited circumstances officers are able to enter private property to remove a dog which has attacked a person or animal.
- They are also able to stop an animal which is attacking or harassing animals in a wildlife protection area or on inclosed lands within the meaning of the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901, (If there is no reasonable alternative, council officers are empowered to injure or destroy an animal under these circumstances).
- Councils also have a range of powers to deal with major or ongoing problems. These powers include the ability to issue nuisance orders, which require the owner of a dog or cat to stop the animal from causing a particular nuisance. Failure to comply with a nuisance order is an offence. Councils can also declare a dog dangerous if it has without provocation attacked or killed a person or animal, or repeatedly threatened to do so. The owners of dangerous dogs must comply with strict conditions for the

control and restraint of their animal, and must notify council of where a dangerous dog is to be kept.

Useful Links and Contacts

If you would like more information on the Companion Animals Act, you can visit the Department of Local Government website which has a site containing information and resources for dog and cat owners, breeders, pet shops, vets, authorised identifiers and councils in NSW.

Contact details:

Hurstville City Council

(02) 9330 6222 (24 hour customer service)

NSW Animal Services

Provides information on management of animals for the general public, animal management officers and councils. Also contains frequently asked questions on cats and stray and injured animals.

Phone: (02) 9150 6545

Mobile: 0412 502 708

Email: animalservices@optusnet.com.au

Sydney Dogs Home Inc.

77 Edward Street,

Carlton NSW 2218

Phone: 9587 9611

Fax: 9588 9569

Email: mail@sydneydogshome.org

Action Plan – Responsible Pet Ownership (Education at a School Level)

Aim:

The aim of the action plan for responsible pet ownership is to incorporate an educational program for schools within Hurstville LGA. Educating children on how to behave around animals and educating them on animal health and welfare.

<i>Strategic Action</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Investigate the feasibility of a companion animals educational program at schools within Hurstville LGA		Monitoring Services section	1 year	Feasibility study undertaken
Incorporate companion animal education program into the program of Environmental Education Officer		Monitoring Services section	2 years	Education campaign developed and implemented

Objectives:

The objectives of a companion animal educational program for school children within Hurstville LGA are;

- Educate children on the health and welfare of companion animals
- Educate children on prevention of cruelty to animals
- Identify appropriate methods of interaction between children and companion animals

Action Plan – Responsible Pet Ownership (Education of the Community)

Aim:

The aim of the action plan for responsible pet ownership is to educate community members. Education of animals, owners and prospective owners involves showing people (especially children) how to behave around animals and educating of animal health and welfare.

<i>Strategic Action</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Investigate the feasibility of implementing an educational program for community members		Monitoring Services section	1 year	Feasibility study undertaken
Incorporate a companion animal education program for community members		Monitoring Services section	2 years	Education campaign developed and implemented

Objectives:

The objectives of a companion animal educational program for community members are;

- Promote the relative merits of obtaining a companion animal from an animal shelter or pound
- Design information package for companion animal owners and distribute upon animal registration
- Address in detail the reasons behind Microchipping & registration of companion animals
- Identify possible guest speakers for companion animal education program for community members
- Address companion animal owners obligations under the NSW legislation

Action Plan – Companion Animals in Public Places (Leash Free Areas)

Aim:

The aim of the action plan for Companion Animals in Public Places is to identify appropriate leash free areas and implement more dog friendly facilities in the designated leash free areas.

<i>Strategic Action</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Identify other possible leash free areas		Monitoring Services section	1 year	Identified possible leash free areas
Incorporate more leash free areas around Hurstville LGA		Monitoring Services section	2 years	Developed extended leash free areas
Implement dog waste bins		Monitoring Services section	1 year	Dog waste bins provided at leash free parks

Objectives:

The objectives of identifying leash free areas are;

- Provide leash free areas area's within Hurstville LGA
- Provide dog waste bins to minimise dog faeces within leash free areas

Action Plan – A Public Agenda (Public Companion Animal Committee)

Aim:

The aim of the action plan for A Public Agenda is to investigate the feasibility of implementing a public companion animal committee.

<i>Strategic Action</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Investigate the feasibility of a public companion animal committee		Monitoring Services section	1 year	Feasibility study undertaken
Incorporate a public companion animal committee		Monitoring Services section	2 years	Public companion animal committee incorporated

Objectives:

The objectives of a public companion animal committee are;

- Invite community members within Hurstville LGA and possibly Kogarah and Rockdale LGA to join a public companion animal committee to:
 - Identify issues in regards to companion animals
 - To suggest ideas for improvement in regards to companion animal management
 - To communicate between local governments and the community