

Companion Animal Management Policy

As at September 2020



COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

RESPONSIBILITY	Manager Environmental Services		
DATE ADOPTED	2 March 2010	MINUTE	60/10
REVISED	September 2020	REVIEW	2022
ECM No			
ASSOCIATED POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		
ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Companion Animal Act 1998</i> • <i>Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992</i> • <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> • <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> • <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</i> • <i>Companion Animals Regulation 2018</i> 		
ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strathfield Council Plans of Management (various) • Strathfield Council Social and Recreation Plans 		

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Title and Commencement

This policy is titled *Strathfield Council Companion Animal Policy*. This policy was adopted on 2 March 2010 by Council resolution 60/10. The following amendments have been made.

Date	Type	Minute
5 October 2010	Amendment	246/10
September 2020	Review	CEO approval

1.2 Background and Purpose of Policy

The Strathfield Companion Animals Management Policy has been developed to set out how Council intends to deal with companion animal related matters in the Strathfield Local Government Area (LGA) to protect the rights and responsibilities of animals and their owners in balance with the rights and responsibilities of others in the community.

The Policy is consistent with the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (NSW) ("the Act"). The Act covers the responsibilities and rights of the owners of companion animals, such as cats and dogs, the control of companion animals, provision of off-leash areas, dangerous dogs, assistance animals used by people with a disability, and seized animals.

The Act gives Authorised Officers, such as Council rangers, powers to deal with breaches of the Act.

1.3 Objectives of the policy

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Promote responsible animal care and ownership and community safety through registration, desexing of animals, dog faeces management, control in public areas and responsible care in private areas that minimises unnecessary noise and nuisance.
- Provide information and support for animal owners in Strathfield LGA to promote responsible animal ownership.
- Encourage owners to desex animals as a strategy of reducing the number of unwanted and unowned animals, especially cats
- Inform owners of the responsibility to report changes to ownership (eg new owner, change of address etc) to ensure that the Companion Animals Register contains accurate and up to date ownership records
- Ensure owners of Restricted Breeds and Dangerous Dogs comply with all relevant provisions of the Act
- Apply enforcement in relation to Restricted Breeds, Dangerous Dogs and when owners allow dogs to enter prohibited areas such as playgrounds and childcare facilities or cause repeated damage to private property
- Promote suitable off-leash parks and spaces for dog exercise and provide clear signage and facilities for disposal of dog faeces
- Preventing damage to biodiversity, wildlife and threatened species by irresponsible animal ownership

1.4 Coverage of the Policy

The policy applies to the Strathfield Local Government Area.

1.5 Definitions

Cat - means an animal of the species *Felis catus*, whether or not the domesticated.

Dog: - means an animal (of either sex, or desexed) of the species *Canis familiarise*, whether or not domesticated.

Assistance Animal - means an animal trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability eg guide dogs, hearing assistance dogs etc

2.0 Companion Animal issues in Strathfield LGA

2.1 About Strathfield Local Government Area

Strathfield Local Government Area (LGA) is located in Sydney's Inner West about 14km from the Sydney City Centre, about half way between Sydney and Parramatta. The following suburbs are located in the Strathfield LGA: Strathfield, Strathfield South, Homebush, Homebush West, Belfield (part), and Greenacre (part).

The population of Strathfield LGA is estimated at 35,000 and is anticipated to increase in future. The increase in population is due to the increased supply of new multi-unit housing, especially near town centres and transport corridors.

Population density as at 2008 averages 2295 people per square km, with higher densities in the north near town and transport centres. 33.4% of Strathfield LGA is residential. Residential land use ranges from separate houses with gardens (private open space) to multi-unit dwellings eg medium to high home units and townhouses. Registration records indicate that companion animals in Strathfield LGA live in both homes with gardens as well as home units and townhouses with restricted or no private open spaces. In the last few years, there has been an increase of companion animals living in multi-unit dwellings in Strathfield LGA.

Demographic data indicates that the population is increasingly mobile and changing addresses on a regular basis. This is likely due to increasing supply of new multi-unit housing and increased availability of rental property in Strathfield LGA.

8.8% of land in Strathfield LGA is open space, which includes parks and reserves. Most residential dwellings are located within walking distance of a park.

The changing built environment and increases in population density and mobility have impact on the management of companion animals in the Strathfield LGA.

2.3 Animal issues in Strathfield LGA

A number of issues have been identified relating to management of companion animals in Strathfield LGA. These issues have been identified from community feedback for the Strathfield Recreation, Community and Cultural Study 2007 and Social Plan (2009-2014) as well as statistical data, complaint data and observations from Council staff.

- Animal owners are required by law to register dogs and cats, however it is likely that many animals living in Strathfield LGA may not be registered. Failure to register animals, desex animals and update owner information creates significant animal management problems including difficulties in locating owners of lost animals, unwanted breeding of animals etc.
- Desexing of animals, other than breeding animals, is not mandatory under the Companion Animals Act, though the Act encourages desexing by discounted fees for registration of desexed animals. Desexing of animals is important in reducing the breeding of unwanted stray and feral animals in Strathfield LGA.
- Increasing population mobility can contribute to inaccuracies in ownership information on the Companion Animal Register. Information needs to be updated when owners change home address. Some owners may be unaware of the need to update their addresses, which may jeopardise successful return of lost animals.
- There is potential for conflicts between people and animals sharing public spaces such as parks and footpaths. Management of animal behaviour and dog faeces in public places is important to the health and safety of people and animals. Providing spaces for animal exercise, especially for dog walking is important to the health of the animal. Additionally, dog walking is an important form of physical activity for residents, especially for older people. Off-leash areas provide spaces for dog to exercise more freely, however, with increasing housing and population density, places for off-leash areas need to be reviewed to meet community needs.

- Increasing population as well as additional mobility requires promoting awareness of animal ownership issues for existing and new residents in Strathfield LGA. Targeted groups should include new residents as well as people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) with poor proficiency in the English language.

2.4 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the natural diversity of Australia's native animals and plants.

Council is required under the Local Government Act to protect and enhance biodiversity by developing, protecting, restoring, enhancing and conserving the environment of Strathfield Local Government Area in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Companion animals that are poorly managed and controlled are a major threat to our local biodiversity. A wide variety of native animals, ranging from the more common species like possums, kangaroos, wallabies, lizards and many species of bird, to rarer or threatened species such as the green & golden bell frog, may be at risk from domestic pets in urban areas.

Threats to biodiversity by companion animals are minimised by:

- Ensuring dogs are kept under control by providing healthy food and sufficient exercise, proper restraints in public places and securing the dog within a property so it is unable to roam streets and parks without adequate controls. This will help protect dogs from being injured or killed by cars.
- Keeping cats indoors at night, particularly at dawn and dusk. Even domestic cats roam at night hunt and kill possums and other small native mammals while birds are often targets at dawn and dusk when they are most active. Keeping cats enclosed will also protect the cat from fights and the subsequent infection and disease, and reduces the risks of cats being injured or killed by cars.
- Controlling unowned stray and feral animals. Unowned and especially feral animals are a significant threat to native animals as they prey upon other animals for food supply and also can spread disease. As stray and feral animals are not owned, they generally suffer from poor health, starvation, disease, suffering and short lives.
- Obtaining native pets legally. Although many native species are not well suited to domestic life, most states and territories do allow some native species to be kept as pets under certain conditions. Always check with the National Parks and Wildlife Service for conditions in NSW if intending to acquire a native pet.

3.0 Animal management framework

3.1 Companion Animals Act 1998

The NSW Companion Animals Act and Regulation set the framework for the manner in which local councils deal with issues relating to companion animals. Strathfield Council's response to companion animal management is influenced by Council's obligations under this Act.

The Act indicates that "companion animal" means each of the following:

- a dog
- a cat
- any other animal that is prescribed by the regulations as a companion animal.

The fact that an animal is not strictly a “companion” does not prevent it being a companion animal for the purposes of the Act. All dogs are treated as companion animals, including working dogs on rural properties, guard dogs and police dogs.

The Act sets out controls in relation to the following:

- the registration and identification requirements for companion animals
- the requirement for dogs in a public place to be on a leash and under effective control at all times, except when in a designated off-leash area
- the fact that if a dog rushes at, attacks, bites, harasses or chases another person or animal, the owner of the dog is guilty of an offence
- areas in which dogs and cats are prohibited
- requirement that an animal owner must dispose of any faeces deposited by their animal in a public place
- procedures for dealing with stray animals
- requirements required to be met when keeping a dangerous or restricted breed dog.
- declaration of a dangerous dog

Failure to comply with the Act may involve fines from Council and Courts. Serious breaches of the Act involve fines of over \$50,000.

The key legislative responsibilities under the Act include:

3.2 Companion Animals Register and Fees

The Division of Local Government (DLG) administers the state wide registration of companion animal registration. All NSW Councils operate as a registration point for companion animals and provide general written information and advice regarding registration requirements. Companion animal information can be registered or amended at any council in NSW including changing of address.

Access to information held on the Companion Animals Register will be assessed in accordance with the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. Requests must be made by formal access application.

Registration fees are statutory charges determined by the NSW Government. The Regulation provides for reduced registration fees for desexed animals owned by pensioners³ and fee exemptions for assistance dogs. The fee for registration of desexed animals is considerably less than that of undesexed animals.

Refunds will not be issued for lifetime registration fees.

³ Includes aged pension, war widows pension or disability pension.

3.3 Registration and microchipping

The Companion Animals Act 1998 requires that companion animals must be microchipped by 12 weeks of age and that animals be registered by 6 months of age. This process is referred to as 'lifetime registration'. Microchipping and registration assist the management of companion animals, in particular the identification and return of lost animals to their owners.

If an animal moves from a state or country outside of NSW, the animal must be registered within three months of moving into NSW. Registration is not transferrable from another State to NSW.

Microchipping involves insertion of a chip under the skin between the shoulder blades of the companion animal. All Vets in NSW are authorised to implant microchips. The chip is about the same size of a grain of rice and embeds itself in the body tissue of the animal. It is no more distressing than the animal receiving an immunization or vaccination needle. This form of identification is for the life of the animal.

When the chip is inserted, the owner is required to complete a form with their personal details, which is then forwarded to the owner's local council. Information is entered into the Companion Animals Register, which can be accessed by all Councils in NSW.

Registration is a one-off process that applies for the lifetime of the animal. Council operates as a companion animal's registration point. If an animal owner's address or contact details change, Council should be notified so that the companion animals register can be updated. Updated information can be provided to any Council in NSW.

Any dog or cat that is impounded, declared a nuisance, declared dangerous or is a restricted dog, must be microchipped and lifetime registered even if the animal is below six months of age.

3.4 Desexing

Council encourages owners of companion animals to desex their animals to prevent the unplanned breeding of unwanted animals. Other benefits of desexing include reducing the likelihood that a dog or cat will stray, reducing fighting and aggression and reducing anti-social behaviour such as spraying to mark territory.

Desexing of animals assists in the control of unplanned breeding of stray and feral animals.

There are discounts offered for registration of desexed animals.

3.5 Collar and Tag

When in a public place, a dog must have a collar around its neck with a name tag that shows the name of the dog and the address or telephone number of the owner of the dog.

A cat must be identified by a form of identification that enables Council 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

3.6 Changing addresses

It is the responsibility of owners to notify Council when there is change of details such as change of ownership, moving house etc.

The Change of Owner/Details and Change of Address Notice is available from Council's Customer Service Centre or Council's website. When the form is completed, it must be lodged with Council within 14 days of the change.

There is no payment required for changing details.

3.7 Death or lost animal

Owners are required to notify Council within 28 days of the death of animal. In the case of a dangerous or restricted dog, Council must be notified within 24 hours.

Owners must notify Council if the animal dies or goes missing for more than 3 days and also if the animal has been found, if it was reported as missing.

Penalties apply for failure to notify under the Act.

3.8 Giving away animals

Companion animals cannot be given away unless the animal has been microchipped. All puppies or kittens must be microchipped by the age of 12 weeks, even if they are then sold or given away.

Penalties apply for breach of these provisions.

3.9 Animals killed by traffic

Council's rangers will remove animals which are found dead in public places, usually the result of being killed by road traffic. Reports of dead animals can be reported to Council by contacting Council's Customer Service or completing an online request form on Council's website.

Council will attempt to ascertain ownership of the animal and contact the owner of the animal.

Council will notify the Director-General of the animal's death, if the animal is microchipped, in order to amend the Companion Animals Register.

3.10 Prohibited areas

Section 14 of the Act prohibits dogs, even those leashed or controlled, from particular public places. This section does not apply to police dogs or assistance animals. These places include:

- Children's play areas eg within 10 metres of children's play areas or playgrounds
- Food preparation/consumption areas eg within 10 metres of any place for preparation or consumption of food by people (this does not include public thoroughfares eg roads or footpaths⁴)
- Recreation areas eg places for the playing of organised games (subject to Council determination and signage)
- School grounds without the permission of the person controlling the school⁵
- Child care centres without the permission of the person controlling the childcare centre⁶
- Shopping areas (subject to Council determination and signage)
- Wildlife Protection Areas (subject to Council determination and signage)

Section 30 of the Act prohibits cats from wildlife protection areas and food preparation areas at all times.

Owners of animals in prohibited places may be charged with an offence under the Act.

3.11 Wildlife Protection Areas in Strathfield LGA

The following areas are considered wildlife protection areas for the purposes of the Act in Strathfield LGA:

- Mason Park Wetlands (wetlands zone only), Homebush
- Cox's Creek Bushland Reserve, Greenacre
- Green and Golden Bell Frog Habitat Area, Greenacre

Council will provide on-site signage to indicate the boundaries of the wildlife protection area.

3.12 Assistance Animals

Section 9(2) of the *Disability Discrimination Act* states that an assistance animal is a dog or other animal:

- accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a persons with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or
- accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or

⁴ Clause 14(1)(b) & 14(4) *Companion Animals Act 1998*

⁵ Clause 14(1)(e) & 14(5) *Companion Animals Act 1998*

⁶ Clause 14(1)(f) & 14(5) *Companion Animals Act 1998*

- trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

A person with a disability is entitled to be accompanied by an assistance animal when entering any building open to the public or public transport.

It is an offence for an assistance animal to be denied entry or charged for entry when accompanied by a person with a disability.

However, it is not unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act for a person to request that an assistance animal remains under the control of the person with a disability or another person on behalf of the person with a disability such as a carer and evidence provided that the animal is an assistance animal or is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for an animal in a public place.

3.13 Reporting lost animals

If an animal has been lost, the owner should contact Council's customer service or submit a request via Council's website.

3.14 Stray animals

Council rangers perform the function of collecting stray animals from public places. Animals wandering in streets without an owner or located in prohibited areas may be seized by Council rangers under the authority of the Act.

Animals seized under the Act must be delivered as soon as possible to the owner, pound or approved premises.

Council will attempt in the first instance to locate the owner. Council's rangers are equipped with a microchip reading device and can ascertain if the animal is microchipped. The name and last address of the owner is then checked against the Companion Animals database. If the animal owner is able to be contacted, then Council will return the animal to the owner.

If Council is unable to contact the owner of a stray animal, the animal is then transferred to Council's pound. Under the Act, Council is required to hold a microchipped/registered animal for fourteen days. Animals which are not registered or microchipped are held for seven days.

In instances where lost animals are not claimed by their owners, Council will attempt where possible to re-house the animal, subject to a health assessment by a qualified veterinarian.

In instances where an animal is evaluated to be feral, without an owner and/or considered dangerous to health of people and other animals (eg carrying transmittable diseases), the animal will be assessed jointly by an authorised Council officer and qualified veterinarian. Council will act in accordance with their agreed recommendations.

3.15 Claimed animals

The owner of an animal that has been taken to the pound and subsequently claimed is required to pay fees to cover cost of impounding and any medical treatment required by the pound for the safety of the animal or other animals eg flea treatment etc.

Before an animal can be released to the owner or a new owner the animal must be microchipped and registered.

An administration fee is payable on release.

3.16 Council pound

Council's Pound is run on a contractual basis and is authorised to accept companion animals only. Information on Council's pound, including opening hours, is available on Council's website at www.strathfield.nsw.gov.au

3.17 Park planning and Plans of Management

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*, community land managed by Council requires a Plan of Management. The Plan of Management (POM) outlines the objectives for managing the land and the activities which are permissible uses of the land. Decisions regarding areas of open space suitable for off-leash dog access are reflected in the content of plans of management.

Draft plans of management are publicly exhibited by Council as required by the *Local Government Act 1993*. A plan of management is adopted after consideration has been given to all submissions made in response to the public exhibition. If Council wishes to amend an existing plan of management, the draft amended plan must be placed on public exhibition. It is not necessary to publicly exhibit an amended plan if Council is of the opinion that the amendments are not substantial.

4.0 Ownership responsibilities

4.1 Choosing a suitable animal

Animals should not be bought or accepted unless potential owners have fully considered the responsibilities and practicalities of owning an animal. The high rates of unwanted and dumped animals in NSW are partly attributable to insufficient consideration of these issues.

Prospective owners should be aware of their responsibilities in regards to such matters as:

- Careful consideration should be made prior to selecting an animal. Animals must be suitable to living arrangements and dwelling types. Issues such as type of animal, potential size of animal, estimated life span, exercise requirements, grooming requirements etc will influence decisions. In particular, people living in strata schemes (eg home units) need to be aware that keeping an animal may be prohibited by the strata by-laws and consent may be required by the Strata Scheme Management Committee to keep an animal.
- Owners need to be aware that they are legally responsible for the behaviour of their animals, especially dogs, in public places. This includes requirements for dogs to be

controlled (eg on-leash) and management of dog faeces. Owners must always minimise the potential to harm or aggravate members of the community.

- Maintaining an animal has economic impact, which extends beyond initial acquisition of the animal, registration and desexing. Animals need regular veterinary care for vaccinations and checkups as well as medical care for injuries and illness. Animals need to be fed healthy food, access clean drinking water and should be groomed regularly.

4.2 Penalties and offences for dogs

Council may issue a notice or order where a dog is:

- habitually at large
- persistently barks or makes a noise that continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in another premise
- repeatedly defecates outside the property
- repeatedly chases or runs at any person or vehicle
- endangers the health of any person and / or repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property on which it is kept.

Seizure of an attacking and/or biting dog and where control requirements associated with restricted breeds are not complied with.

Council can issue a penalty infringement notice to owners of dogs:

- found in prohibited places such as child care centres, children's play areas, food preparation and consumption areas (unless in a road reserve), public bathing areas and parks/recreational areas so indicated as prohibiting dogs, and designated wildlife protection areas
- not contained within a property and not on a leash whilst in a public place other than a designated off-leash area
- that defecate in public place and the dog faeces are not collected and disposed of by the owner
- selling a restricted dog or proposed restricted dog
- if the dog has not been microchipped and registered.

4.3 Penalties and offences for cats

Council can issue a penalty infringement notice to owners of cats:

- found in prohibited places such as designated wildlife protection areas, or
- if the cat has not been microchipped and registered.

5.0 Management of Dogs

5.1 Overview

Dogs play an important role in the community, providing companionship and security to their owners as well as helping people with disabilities lead more independent lives. Dogs share many public places with people, including parks and footpaths. Dog walking, for instance, is one of Strathfield's most popular recreation activities, especially for older people.

This section sets out the responsibilities in regard management of dogs.

5.2 Control of Dogs

Under the Act, dogs must always be under the effective control of their owners including when they are let off the leash in designated off-leash areas. Except for designated off-leash areas, dogs in a public place in the Strathfield Council must remain under the effective control of a competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash.

A dog without adequate control can be seized by Council officers.

Exceptions to this requirement include a situation where the dog is in a declared off-leash area or where the dog is tethered to a fixed object or structure.

A dog is not considered to be under the effective control of a person if that person has more than four dogs under his or her control.

Council encourages all dog owners to enrol their dogs in a training course if they feel they are not able to effectively control their dog.

5.3 Exercise requirements

To promote good health and good behaviour, dogs need regular exercise. Lack of exercise can lead to undesirable behaviours such as barking, digging and aggression. Large dogs need more exercise than smaller dogs.

5.4 Off-leash dog areas

Off-leash or leash-free areas permit a dog to roam without restrictions, though the Act requires that the dog must be under the effective control of a competent person and no more than four dogs can be walked by one person at any one time.

Off-leash dog areas are considered beneficial as they provide areas for dogs to exercise and release energy which may also assist in controlling nuisance behaviour such as barking.

Access to public places to walk or run the dog are very important, especially for residents living in home units or townhouses with limited access to open space to run or socialise their dogs.

The Act requires each Council to have at least one off-leash dog exercise area.

The current off-leash dog areas in the Strathfield LGA are located at:

- Elliott Reserve, Elliott Street, Belfield
- Allen Street Reserve, Allen Street, Homebush

Except for designated off-leash areas, dogs in a public place in the Strathfield Council must remain under the effective control of a competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash.

Council will review off-leash provisions and may recommend changes to off-leash or on-leash areas in response to changing demographics or community needs. Recommendations for changes to existing off-leash areas, or for additional off-leash areas will be referred to Council to determine. The process will involve community consultation.

Selection of suitable off-leash areas should consider:

- Size of the proposed off-leash area. Size of the off-leash area should be large enough for dogs to run freely and be exercised properly
- Impact on the other uses of the park
- Times of use as off-leash area
- Fencing requirements
- Accessibility to the off-leash area eg pedestrian access, parking etc.
- Proximity to public places which are unsuitable and/or prohibited (such as childcare centres, playgrounds or sportsfields) and the nature of any barriers between those areas
- Signage to clearly identify the boundaries and conditions of use of off-leash areas.
- Management of dog waste and provision of facilities for disposal of dog faeces.

5.5 Dog faeces management

Uncollected dog faeces in public places pose significant health risks to the community as well as being unpleasant to other persons using public places especially on footpaths, nature strips, parks and sporting grounds. Uncollected faeces can also potentially enter natural water courses and create health and environmental problems. Nutrients from dog faeces encourage weed growth in natural areas.

Dog owners have a legal responsibility to clean up and dispose of dog droppings (faeces) when in public places such as parks and streets. Failure to remove faeces is an offence and may result in the issue of a fine.

Council advises that owners that when walking a dog, owners take a plastic bag with them and the dog faeces disposed of in a litter bin.

Council provides litter dispensers in off-leash areas

5.6 Uncontrolled and aggressive dogs

Animal owners are responsible for the behaviour of their dog. Uncontrolled and aggressive dogs are harmful to people and other animals, especially children and older people, and could result in physical injuries or attacks.

Any breed of dog can exhibit uncontrolled or aggressive behaviour, however dogs which are trained and socialised are less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour.

Council has powers under the Act to fine those dog owners who do not prevent their animal from acting in an uncontrolled manner.

5.7 Dog attacks

If a dog attack occurs, victims and witnesses are strongly encouraged to report the incident to Council as soon as possible. Severe attacks should be reported to Police.

Upon receiving complaints or reports of dog attacks, Council will respond within 24 hours. A dog that has attacked may be declared to be a dangerous dog by Council.

5.8 Restricted Breeds

Some breeds of dog are prohibited from importation into Australia. These breeds are specified under the *Companion Animals Act 1998* and include: Pit Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, Japanese Tosa and Argentinean and Brazilian fighting dogs.

The sale or transfer of ownership of restricted breeds is prohibited. Owners of restricted breeds (and dogs declared 'dangerous') must ensure:

- The dog is desexed
- The dog is kept in a child proof enclosure
- A Council 'dangerous dog' warning sign is clearly displayed on their property
- The dog at all times wears a distinctive collar and tag
- The dog is always leashed and muzzled when in public and under the control of a person over the age of 18 years
- The dog's registration details are up to date
- Council is immediately notified if the dog attacks or injures a person or animal

Council can issue a notice of intention to declare a dog a restricted breed if it is a cross breed of any of the dogs listed above. This notification sets out the control requirements the owner must comply with.

If a restricted dog is lost or dies, Council must be notified within 24 hours.

5.9 Dangerous dogs

Council can declare a dog as dangerous where it displays unreasonable aggression or is a dog kept for hunting purposes. Owners may also voluntarily declare their pet as a dangerous dog.

Dogs that threaten or attack members of the public or animals can be declared as dangerous. Police and Council rangers are empowered to impound dogs declared as dangerous.

Owners of dogs declared dangerous must comply with all the conditions for restricted breeds listed above and must not be sold to a person under the age of 18 years.

5.10 Dog Barking

Persistent dog barking can be a neighbourhood nuisance and a major source of community complaint. Persistent barking may be caused by boredom, lack of exercise and stimulation, or confinement to an inappropriately small space.

To address dog barking Council will pursue positive and proactive approaches such as:

- Providing off-leash areas for dogs to socialise.
- Providing community education and training for dog owners.

Rangers will issue a Nuisance Dog Order where persistent barking is considered to be nuisance behaviour. In serious cases, dog owners may be liable to prosecution.

5.11 Securing dogs within a property

Dog owners have an obligation to confine their dogs in a manner which prevents them from leaving the owner's property. Dogs must not access public areas such as streets, footpaths, parks etc unless they are under the control of their owner.

Unrestrained dogs can be threatening to people but can also be hurt or killed by a vehicle.

5.12 Stray dogs

Stray dogs can cause problems in regards to traffic safety, interference with wildlife and unwanted puppy litters. Stray dogs can be seized by Council. If Council is unable to contact the owner of the animal, the animal will be transferred to Council's pound.

6.0 Management of Cats

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 Domestic cats

Domestic cats play an important role in providing companionship to many members of the community. If cats are owned and cared for in a responsible manner, cats can make a positive contribution to the community. Desexing, microchipping and registration of cats all contribute to responsible cat management.

However, cats can be a threat to wildlife and Council strongly advises that domestic cats should be kept indoors, particularly at night. Cats which are kept indoors are unable to harm native wildlife and are less likely to contribute to problems associated with colonies of unowned and feral cats.

Cats which are kept indoors are also less likely to harm themselves or engage in fights with other cats. Cats breed quickly and are capable of reproducing from around 1 year of age. Therefore, it is strongly advised that cats are desexed to prevent unwanted births.

6.1.2 Unowned, stray and feral cats

There is a difference between cats which are owned by a particular person (and which are generally fed and cared for by that person) and stray or unowned which are not owned by a particular person and which live on the streets usually in cat colonies. Unowned cats are often underweight, sick with cat flu, or have heavy flea and worm infestations. They may have injuries from fights or from being hit by cars. They may also have developed skin cancers, or contracted fatal diseases such as feline AIDS (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus). Unowned cats often suffer from very poor health, and live in a state of starvation and disease. The average life expectancy of an unowned cat is 3 years, compared to 12 to 15 years for an owned and desexed cat.

Feral cats are also unowned but are significantly more dangerous to the environment, people and other animals. Feral cats are not accustomed to people and can exhibit wild and uncontrolled behaviour causing health risks to people and other animals. Feral cat colonies typically tend to group in areas such as industrial land and shopping areas in Strathfield LGA. Feral cats typically prey on wildlife, spray strong smelling urine around houses and cars, fight with owned cats, spread disease, yowl at night, and defecate in gardens and sandpits.

Australia has a significant feral cat problem, which threatens many endangered wildlife species and spreads disease. The number of feral cats substantially outnumbers of domestic cats by an estimated 18 million to 3 million.

Cats which are not cared for by an owner can become feral.

6.2 Roaming cats

Cats are more mobile than dogs and therefore, can easily roam beyond their owner's property into neighbouring properties. Most roaming cats do not cause harm to people or other animals. Cats are likely to roam into a property which leaves food lying around for other pets. The presence of an undesexed female cat will attract other cats. Therefore, Council recommends that cats be kept indoors at night, that food is not left lying around outdoors and that cats are desexed.

If a cat causes problems, a complaint can be made to Council. Council will follow up the complaint with the owner of the cat, if ownership can be ascertained.

Council is unable to seize a roaming cat from private property. Complainants can obtain an authorised cat trap from Council, upon payment of a refundable security deposit. After trapping, Council will pick up the cat and deliver the cat to the pound. Cat traps are designed not to harm the animal and are used by animal welfare organisations as well as Council.

Council does not issue cat traps for the purpose of trapping possums. Possums are a protected native animal and a permit is required for trapping.

6.3 Nuisance cats

Action can be taken against the owner of a 'nuisance' cat, under the relevant provisions of the Act. A cat is considered to be a 'nuisance' if it makes a noise that unreasonably interferes with the peace or comfort of a person or if it repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is normally kept.

Council can issue a nuisance notice or order where a cat:

- persistently makes a noise or the noise continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premise
- where a cat repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

The process for trapping an unowned cat is the same as that outlined in Section 6.2 Roaming Cats.

6.4 Registration and identification requirements

All cats born from 1999 are required to be microchipped. Owners must ensure that a cat is identifiable by wearing of a collar with identification tags.

6.5 Prohibited areas

Cats are prohibited from entering particular places, such as food preparation/consumption areas and wildlife protection areas.

Council can issue a penalty infringement notice where a cat is found in prohibited places such as food preparation / consumption areas and designated wildlife protection areas.