

Dog and Cat Management Board

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Updated 2022



**The effective management of
dogs and cats is an important
component of community
wellbeing**



Government of South Australia
Dog and Cat Management Board







From the chairperson

On behalf of the Dog and Cat Management Board, I present this five-year strategic plan for managing dogs and cats across South Australia. It is an evolving program based on informed decision-making.

Effective dog and cat management is an important component of community wellbeing and community expectations of dog and cat owner responsibilities and animal welfare is increasing.

The Board is committed to working effectively with local government and key stakeholders, providing support and keeping dog and cat management legislation under review.

The Board's previous strategic plan delivered the following significant actions.

-  Legislative change.
-  Mandatory desexing and microchipping of dogs and cats.
-  Helping to reduce unwanted litters and the high volume of animals euthanised in pounds or shelters. We've made the pet trade—particularly dog and cat sellers—accountable through mandatory registration. This is also bringing puppy farm operators into the open.
-  The introduction of the Dogs and Cats Online (DACO) system which combined 69 individual databases across the state and built relationships with long-standing and new key stakeholders. There is now a centralised point for managing the details of every known dog and cat in the state, such as microchip and desexing information, dog incident and breeder history.
-  Empowering dog and cat owners to register pets, update details and link microchip details at any time, on-line. Most importantly, lost pets are now easily identified and returned to owners and local government boundaries are no longer a barrier in this process.
-  Individual pet owners, the RSPCA, the Animal Welfare League and Vets are now registering and updating microchip details free of charge on DACO, eliminating national microchip database fees.

These achievements have delivered substantial savings for local government through reduced postage and administration costs, and streamlined annual reporting and registration processes.

Over the next five years, we will build on this work by delivering two key program areas. This five year strategic plan is supported by the Board's operational plan which identifies a number of priority actions which underpin the Board's objectives.

I look forward to this five year journey along with our other knowledgeable, committed Board members and staff.






David Parkin
Chairperson
Dog and Cat Management Board





Introduction

The Dog and Cat Management Board (the Board) is a corporate body established by the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (the Act)*. The objectives of the Act are:

-  to encourage responsible dog and cat ownership;
-  to reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats; and
-  to promote the effective management of dogs and cats.





The Board comprises nine members appointed by the Minister. Four members are nominated by the Local Government Association and four by the Minister. The Chair is jointly nominated by the LGA and Minister. Board members are listed on the Board's website at dogandcatboard.com.au

The Board, which is subject to the direction of the Minister, administers the Act and associated regulations. Staff of the Dog and Cat Management Board unit are employed by the Department of Environment and

Water under a service level agreement with the Board. The Board's activities are funded through a portion of dog registration fees paid to South Australian councils and breeder registration fees through the Dogs and Cats Online (DACO) system.

















The Board plays an important advocacy and consultation role in dog and cat management to peak bodies. It manages the DACO system and provides expert advice to the South Australian Government, the Local Government Association (LGA), and South Australian councils and staff.

The Board also takes a leadership role in community safety and education, with a focus on informed dog and cat ownership, and strategies to reduce:

-  the incidence of dog attacks;
-  nuisance caused by cats;
-  unchecked dog and cat breeding; and
-  euthanising lost and unwanted dogs and cats detained in pounds and shelters.

Board functions

The Board's functions are defined by the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* (the Act) which are outlined here in simple terms.

-  Plan for, promote, and provide advice about the effective management of dogs and cats throughout South Australia.
-  Oversee administration and enforcement of the Act.
-  Keep the Act under review and make recommendations to the Minister.
-  Advise the Minister or the Local Government Association on operations relating to the Act or issues directly relating to dog or cat management in South Australia.
-  Undertake or facilitate research relating to dog or cat management.
-  Manage, maintain and enhance the Dogs and Cats Online (DACO) system.
-  Develop policies, procedures and guidelines to administer dog and cat management.
-  Monitor councils' administration and enforcement of the Act.
-  Undertake or facilitate educational and training programs relating to dog or cat management and the DACO system for authorised persons and industry groups.
-  Provide advice, support and assistance to councils about matters relating to the administration or enforcement of the provisions of the Act.
-  Accredite assistance dogs.
-  Accredite training programs for dogs and owners.
-  Keep and maintain registers pertaining to the Act.
-  Consider all proposed by-laws referred to the Board.
-  Fix fees and charges pertaining to the Act.
-  Carry out any other function assigned to the Board by the Minister.



Purpose of this plan

This strategic plan has been developed by the Board to guide its activities and communicate its strategic directions for the period 2020 to 2025. The strategic plan is supported by an annual operational plan which identifies priority actions and projects for the current financial year.



Context of this plan

The effective management of dogs and cats is an important component of community wellbeing.

This strategic plan was developed and released as the community was coming to understand the impacts and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on our lives.

A significant outcome of the pandemic has been an unexpected and sharp increase in the demand for and ownership of pets. Alongside this, the maturing of the statewide data base Dogs and Cats Online and of the community's knowledge and comfort in using this system, has contributed to increased knowledge about dog and cat ownership and revenue for dog and cat management activities.

Issues that continue to influence this strategic plan include:

- Responsible pet ownership continues to intersect with community expectations about animal welfare
- Assistance animals and their potential benefits to people with disabilities are increasing in the community's awareness.
- Changes to urban design and the need for increased public spaces that consider dog and cat ownership.
- Greater interest from the community in animal breeding activities, given the increased demand for puppies and kittens.

Opportunities

- Identifying dog and cat management interventions based on evidence and analysis.
- Building effective partnerships to reduce red-tape.
- Maximising the functionality of Dogs and Cats Online.
- Sharing effective dog and cat management outcomes nationally.

Challenges

- Meeting the needs of diverse stakeholders.
- Addressing cat management and building consensus around cat management approaches.
- Resolving issues with the current legislation.
- Effectively engaging stakeholders and communicating key messages to target audiences.



Our programs and priority actions — What we are going to do

To meet the objectives of the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* (the Act), the Board has identified two programs and set strategic directions under each program.

Program 1

Responsible ownership and effective management of dogs and cats

Strategic directions

-  Inform and educate the community about dog and cat management.
-  Equal focus on cat management to the same level as dog management.
-  Reduce the incidence of dog attacks.
-  Reduce the numbers of unwanted dogs and cats.
-  Support and encourage research on responsible ownership and effective dog and cat management.
-  Develop capacity to fulfill the requirements of the Act.

Priority action 1.1

Deliver and evaluate education programs that promote responsible ownership and effective management of dogs and cats

Undertaking or facilitating educational programs relating to dog or cat management is a statutory function of the Board (s21(1)(f)). A range of educational opportunities have been identified to support not only families and pet owners in good management of pets, but councils in administering the Act, vet clinics as both a source of information to pet owners and users of Dogs and Cats Online, and other a range of other groups who interact with cat and dog management.

Priority action 1.2

Develop and implement a cat management strategy and plan

To assess and address issues with cat management which have been identified by some councils such as: 'barriers' in the Act and regulations; issues identified in the RSPCA/AWL 'Cat Management Plan for SA'. The Board will implement a strategy with councils over the next three to five years.

Priority action 1.3

Develop a plan for improved dog attack data and dog attack counter measures

Dog attacks, including those requiring hospitalisation, have risen steadily over the past seven years. Hospital admissions do not represent all dog attacks which have occurred. The dog incident reporting function of DACO is not being fully utilised. Councils need to be encouraged or provided with incentives to record incidents. Further research into the multiple factors affecting dog attack risks is needed.

Priority action 1.4

Advise the Minister and LGA on amendments required to the Dog and Cat Management Act

Keeping the Act under review and making recommendations to the Minister is a function of the Board (s21(1)(g)). There have been recent calls from councils and animal welfare organisations to change the Act.

Priority action 1.5

Monitor emerging issues

The Board has identified a significant number of matters requiring careful, detailed consideration. A program of workshops and briefings to identify emerging issues and potential paths forward will provide a structured approach to planning and scheduling Board projects and actions.

Strategic directions

-  Reinforce an evidence based approach to addressing issues.
-  Ensure the Board and unit operate at a high level.
-  Maximise the benefits of DACO.
-  Ensure the quality of data.
-  Build and invest in relationships and partnering.
-  Collaborate nationally to manage dogs and cats.
-  Address policy and legislative gaps.
-  Effective financial management.

Priority action 2.1

Implement and evaluate the communication and engagement plan which includes a strategy for developing partnerships with stakeholders

To promote, inform, engage and educate dog and cat owners and key stakeholders on legislative responsibilities, the DACO system, community safety, and dog and cat management. To ensure the Board has the right combination of communication tools and stakeholder engagement approaches.

Priority action 2.2

Implement the DACO framework and action plan to ensure long term viability and sustainability of the system

The DACO data management system captures dog and cat registrations with desexing, microchip and breeder information as well as incident reporting—streamlining management activities in the field.

While DACO is a very valuable system, it requires dedicated resources and funding, commitment and support to the Board's stakeholders.

A framework and action plan aligning to the long-term financial plan will provide a structured approach to enhancing, maintaining and supporting DACO. This will: ensure best-value-for-money is obtained from contractual arrangements, strategically prioritise service enhancements to stakeholders, and provide valuable statistical data.

Priority action 2.3

Maintain a rolling five year financial plan for the Dog and Cat Management Board to ensure financial sustainability and viability

For the Board to successfully deliver its programs of activities, a long-term financial plan is required. Five-year forward financial projections will assist the Board with prioritising and scheduling projects and initiatives.

Priority action 2.4

Regularly evaluate the Board's operations and performance

The business of the Board requires detailed considerations of various matters. A mix of workshops and Board meetings is currently implemented to enable detailed investigation and discussion, as well as good governance in decision making. The Board will regularly evaluate and reflect on its performance through policy reviews and annual self-evaluation.

Priority action 2.5

Support the administration of the Act by local councils and review compliance approaches by the Board

Councils perform an important role in administering the Act. The Board supports councils in a number of ways to ensure they administer the Act appropriately. The Board also has administrative responsibilities under the Act. Reviewing and improving its processes, policies and procedures enables it to continue to achieve its functions. This work contributes to safe communities and positive experiences with dog and cat ownership.

Dog and Cat Management Board

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A copy of this publication is available online
www.dogandcatboard.com.au