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RELEASE OF THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE COMPANION ANIMALS TASKFORCE

The NSW Government has released the full response to the Companion Animals Taskforce, supporting most of the Taskforce's 38 recommendations, in full or in part. It recognises that owning a cat or dog comes with important responsibilities and delivers sensible initiatives to benefit the NSW community as a whole.

The response will better ensure responsible cat and dog ownership, help keep the community safe and further protect animal welfare, while still enabling families and individuals to enjoy the companionship of their pet cats and dogs.

Importantly, councils will have increased funding and other resources to promote responsible pet ownership.

Key measures include:

- Newly enacted laws which are helping councils to control aggressive dogs and which have significantly increased penalties for owners whose dogs are involved in serious attacks.
- A new \$900,000 local council grant program over three years to target microchipping, registration and desexing to reduce pet overpopulation, to be introduced from mid-2014, to address community concern about animal welfare and high euthanasia rates. This will also have a focus on dog attack issues.
- Expanding the Responsible Pet Ownership education program to pre-schools and families expecting new children, from mid-2014 at a cost of \$750,000 over three years, to make sure young children are safe around dogs.
- Increased registration fees in-line with the CPI index, from 1 January 2014, to better reflect the current cost of managing cats and dogs and provide additional funding for education and grant programs.
- A fundamental redesign of the system under which cats and dogs in NSW are managed to ensure that more owners take responsibility for their pets. This will also consider a streamlined and easier on-line registration process for owners."
- A Responsible Pet Ownership Reference Group to provide advice to the Government on strategic cat and dog management issues and to assist further implement Taskforce recommendations. The Reference Group will report to the Minister for Local Government.

These initiatives are the culmination of a lot of hard work by many individuals and organisations. The Government would like to thank the Taskforce, the NSW local government sector, other key stakeholders and broader community for their expert advice and input, including over 5300 submissions in response to the recommendations.

The response is available on the Division of Local Government's website at www.dlg.nsw.gov.au .

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Page', written in a cursive style.

The Hon Don Page MP
Minister for Local Government
Minister for North Coast

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Katrina Hodgkinson', written in a cursive style.

The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP
Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Small Business