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COMPANION ANIMALS AMENDMENT (REPORTING DOG ATTACKS) REGULATION 2009

The Governor of NSW has approved the Companion Animals Amendment (Reporting Dog Attacks) Regulation 2009, which will commence upon publication in the Government Gazette, which is expected to occur on 20 February 2009.

This Regulation amends the Companion Animals Regulation 2008 to require councils to report any relevant information about dog attacks using the Companion Animals Register within 72 hours of receiving the information (clause 33A). This includes the initial notification of an attack and also any additional information council receives in the course of investigating or monitoring an attack incident.

The commencement of this Regulation supersedes the Direction to councils from the Minister for Local Government under section 429 of the *Local Government Act 1993* as notified in Circular to Councils 09-02.

The *Companion Animals Act 1998* and Regulation may be accessed on the Parliamentary Counsel's website at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

As advised in Circular 09-02, the Register has been updated to include a new Dog Attack Reporting module. This replaces the current Dog Attack Report form and is designed to speed up and streamline the data capture process.

The module allows councils to update incident details as an investigation progresses. It will also provide up-to-date reporting functions that will enable councils to monitor their own performance and allow for faster statistical analysis and policy review.

An online user guide for the module is available on the Register. Council staff requiring assistance with dog attack reporting should contact the Companion Animals Team via email to pets@dlg.nsw.gov.au or by telephone on 4428 4100.

Annual reporting requirements for councils

The reporting of dog attack information on the Register does not exempt a council from its obligation under clause 217(1)(e) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 to provide a statement in its annual report relating to the dog attack data it has reported to the Department for that year.

In the event that no dog attacks have been made known to a council in the year, the council must indicate a nil return in the dog attack statement contained in its annual report.

The Department will contact councils annually to obtain confirmation that all known dog attacks have been reported as per the requirements of clause 33A of the Regulation.

Access to dog attack information

In accordance with section 89(4)(c) of the Act, I have granted authority for an authorised officer of a local council to disclose any relevant information about a dog attack to the Department of Local Government and the Minister for Local Government.

This authorisation exempts council officers from the offences outlined in section 89(2) of the Act, but only with respect to the disclosure of dog attack information to the Department and the Minister.

Dog attack information assists the development of the legislative and policy framework to encourage and support responsible dog ownership within the community. The availability of this information is also important when the Department is reviewing council performance during Promoting Better Practice reviews, investigations and inquiries into council activities.

Dog attack website

The Department will publish on its website quarterly summaries of dog attack information reported by councils, which will outline the number of attacks reported by each council for the relevant period and the number of serious attacks involving humans.

The Department will also publish annually on its website a more detailed report including additional information about the breeds of dogs involved in reported attacks, the nature of the attacks and the action taken by the investigating council.



Ross Woodward
Acting Director General