



Circular Details	22-05/15 March 2022/A811129
Previous Circular	N/A
Who should read this	Councillors / General Managers / Companion Animal staff
Contact	Policy Team / (02) 4428 4100 / olg@olg.nsw.gov.au
Action required	Council to Implement

Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Act 2022

What's new or changing

- On 23 February 2022, a Private Members Bill, the *Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill* passed Parliament.
- The Bill seeks to improve rehoming outcomes for pet cats and dogs in the care of NSW council pounds and shelters.

What this will mean for your council

- This means that the *Companion Animals Act 1998* has been amended to prescribe the actions that local councils must take when seeking to rehome a companion animal that has been seized or surrendered.
- Key changes include:
 - The need for councils to give written notice to at least 2 rehoming organisations that the animal is available for rehoming and will remain available for at least 7 days from the date the notice is given.
 - The need to take reasonable steps to advertise on a webpage or through a social media platform that the animal is available for rehoming.
 - New record-keeping requirements in relation to:
 - the identification of animals either rehomed or destroyed, and
 - in the case of animals that are destroyed, the actions a council took to rehome that animal.
- The Office of Local Government (OLG) recognises the critical role that local councils have in rehoming companion animals, and that these changes formalise the actions councils currently undertake.
- Local Government NSW indicated its support for the Bill and described the amendments as straightforward and reasonable.

Key points

- The changes will standardise the rehoming process and create a consistent approach to rehoming across all NSW councils.
- It will also foster the development of closer partnerships with local rehoming organisations that will enable the development of a system that works best for both parties, including shared, cost-effective arrangements for the collection of animals from pounds.
- Importantly, the prohibition on selling or giving away a dangerous, menacing or restricted dog remains in place.

- There is an exception in place for animals that, in the opinion of a veterinary practitioner, are so severely injured, so diseased or in such a physical condition that it is cruel to keep them alive.
- Along with the new record-keeping requirements, guidelines may be developed in relation to the reporting of that information to the Departmental Chief Executive or the public, or both.
- OLG will consult with councils on the development of these guidelines.
- Importantly, the Rehoming Practices Review announced in November 2021 is a separate process to these amendments and will encompass a broader examination of current rehoming practices and factors driving euthanasia rates.
- The Review will be undertaken in consultation with metropolitan, regional and rural councils and rehoming organisations to collect and analyse more information and data to better understand euthanasia rates and trends.
- It will examine breeding, desexing and rehoming practices and their impacts on euthanasia rates. It will also look at ways to reduce euthanasia rates including any need for legislative reform, improvements to impounding processes, and better data collection.
- Any regulatory changes or process improvements recommended in the Review will be fully costed.
- Further details regarding the Review and how councils can participate will soon be made available.

Where to go for further information

- Further information on the *Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Act 2022* is available on the NSW Parliament website [here](#).

Melanie Hawyes

Deputy Secretary, Crown Lands and Local Government