

Media Release

NSW pet laws go under the microscope

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Pet owners and members of the public are being invited to help shape cat and dog laws in NSW, with the NSW Government delivering on its election commitment to conduct a wide-ranging review of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (CA Act).

For the first time in two decades the government will review these laws to greater support responsible pet ownership and ensure the wellbeing of pets and the safety of communities.

The review will examine all aspects of the care and management of companion animals in NSW, including addressing the urgent need to prevent dogs and cats from entering the pound and rehoming system.

It will also explore actions taken in other jurisdictions and the role and enforcement responsibilities of councils. Key issues under consideration include:

- cat management
- preventing dog attacks
- pounds and rehoming services
- registration and desexing
- stakeholder roles and responsibilities and the regulatory tools available under the legislation
- responsible pet ownership education and training

The review of the CA Act will be informed by several NSW parliamentary inquiries, including the inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage, the inquiry into pounds and the inquiry into the management of cat populations. The findings and recommendations from recent coronial inquests into fatal dog attacks in NSW will also be considered.

To support the review, the Office of Local Government has released a discussion paper canvassing three key focus areas:

- the framework for encouraging responsible ownership of companion animals
- the compliance and enforcement role of councils
- animal welfare and rehoming

Pet owners, councils, rehoming organisations, veterinarians and other stakeholders can provide feedback on the discussion paper before 4 May 2025 by responding to consultation questions.

To view the discussion paper and provide feedback visit: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/companion-animals-act-review/>

Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig said:

“There are more than 4.7 million dogs and cats kept as pets in NSW, providing love and companionship to so many people across the state.

“However, the laws around pet ownership haven’t been reviewed in 20 years.

“With pet ownership on the rise and increased pressure on council pounds and rehoming organisations, it is important to assess if the current laws are still fit for purpose.

“We need strong laws that hold pet owners to account and make sure owners take responsibility for their pets at home and in public spaces.

“The government wants to hear from all interested stakeholders to shape this review and ensure a wide range of perspectives are considered as the government progresses this important work.”

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