

## **Dog and Cats Online (DACO) FAQ**

### **What is DACO?**

DACO would replace the current 68 council dog registration databases with one, state-wide online database. The database would also combine information about dog and cat microchips, the proposed breeder registration database and the existing dog incident database.

Dog owners would pay dog registration fees online, through a website. DACO would send owners renewal and reminder notices, plus their registration discs, saving councils significant costs.

DACO information would be available 24/7 to Animal Management Officers (AMOs) and other Authorised Persons, through laptops or their hand-held devices. Officers would be able to identify the homes of dogs that had escaped from other council areas. This would increase the capability of AMOs and save significant time.

DACO would maximise the chances that a lost pet could be returned home quickly, reducing the costs of operating council pounds or the costs of using AWL/RSPCA facilities.

DACO would be designed so that the primary source of data input would be the owners of dogs and cats. Implanters of microchips would also have obligations to upload information. This will reduce the current data-entry imposition on council administrative and front-counter staff.

### **Who is responsible for DACO?**

The Dog and Cat Management Board would project sponsor/project manage DACO. The Board would manage the DACO project, in close collaboration with the local government sector. In particular, the Board would;

- Fund the DACO project from the Dog and Cat Management Fund
- Make decisions about procurement, tendering and contracting, in accordance with State government requirements.
- Direct the development of DACO, in consultation with local government
- Be responsible for any risks of costs overruns, eg from a build blow out.

### **How would the Board pay for DACO?**

The Board would fully fund the DACO project. If expenses in any one year could not be met from within the DCM Fund, the Board would seek a short-term loan from the State government.

To enable the Board to pay for the development and the on-going costs of DACO, the Dog and Cat Management Regulations would be amended so that:

- Country councils would increase the percentage of dog registration fees remitted to the Board from 10-12%; and
- Metropolitan councils would increase the percentage of dog registration fees remitted to the Board from 20-24%.

The 'Business Case', prepared by the Board, demonstrates that DACO would generate greater savings for councils than the cost of the extra percentage, remitted to the Fund.

The increase in percentages remitted would provide ongoing funding for DACO and, over time, replenish the reserves in the DCM Fund.

### **Can councils just do nothing?**

No. As a result of amendments to the DCM Act, all councils will need to make changes to their processes and (likely) their IT systems. As microchipping and desexing become compulsory, councils will need systems to capture the new information. Existing databases may not have the necessary functionality and cannot interface with the databases of other councils.

Instead of 68 councils having to change their current systems, it makes sense to use the legislative changes as the opportunity to create a management system that takes advantage of current technology tools. The opportunity to integrate other databases (microchipping, dog incidents, breeder registration) will give council officers a powerful management tool, without the obligation to maintain the IT system nor the on-going task of inputting the majority of the data.

### **When would DACO be implemented?**

It is proposed that mandatory desexing and microchipping obligations commence on 1 July 2018. DACO would commence at the same time.

It is proposed that, when reminder notices for the 2018-19 dog registration are sent out, they prompt owners to renew through the DACO system. From 1 July 2018, new dog owners would register their dogs through DACO.

Cat owners could also choose to upload, into DACO, their cat details, including microchip numbers.

### **How would councils be consulted?**

Five of the nine members of the Dog and Cat Management Board are from the local government sector. The Board is committed to ensuring that DACO meets the operational and financial objectives of councils.

Board staff are available to ask questions of individual councils and their officers.

The Board proposes to establish multi-disciplinary consultation arrangements, so that the functionality of DACO meets the needs of councils. It is proposed to set up on-going liaison arrangements with:

- The LGA Financial Managers Group
- The Senior Animal Management Officers Forum (these officers are often the managers of Council Regulatory Services).
- LGA Training officers

The Board is prepared to establish other consultation arrangements, as requested by the LGA.

### **Would DACO mean increased work for Council staff?**

No. DACO would significantly reduce staff resources required to collect dog registration fees (renewal and reminder notices).

DACO would make it as easy and convenient for owners to register their dogs and renew registration, online. This is expected to increase the number of people registering their dog each year (which would increase council revenue).

DACO would reduce the number of transactions processed by front-counter staff.

### **What about cats?**

The amendments to the Act have ensured that councils retain significant discretion on the resources they devote to the management of cat issues. Cat registration remains a council-by-council decision.

Cat owners in an area would have an obligation to microchip their cats and to upload their details into DACO (potentially, this may occur through one of the third-party animal registries). DACO would then become a tool that councils could choose to use, to manage cats.

### **Does the Board have statutory power to build and manage DACO?**

Yes. Recent amendments to the Dog and Cat Management Act clarify existing powers, enabling the Board to:

- operate a State-wide dog and cat database;
- provide a dog register on behalf of individual councils
- charge fees to dog and cat owners
- compel councils to provide personal and confidential information about people, overcoming any privacy laws

### **Would other organisations have access to DACO?**

It is proposed to provide the RSPCA and Animal Welfare League with sufficient access, to enable them to return home lost dogs and cats. The RSPCA would also be able to use DACO for investigating and prosecuting breaches of the Animal Welfare Act.

Vets and other microchip implanters would use DACO to upload data about particular dogs and their owners.

The Board will have statutory power to determine which organisations would be granted access to specific fields, within a State-wide database.

### **Summary**

DACO will save all councils money. It will provide councils officers with a powerful new tool for managing dogs and (optionally) cats in their area. DACO will increase the chances that owners have their lost pets returned to them.