

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



Tuesday, 28 July 2020

VIEWS SOUGHT ON SAFELY REUNITING LOST PETS WITH OWNERS

The Victorian Government is encouraging Victorians to have their say on reforms to allow vets and animal shelters to legally reunite lost pets with their owners – a key election commitment for our beloved furry friends.

Under Victoria's existing laws, any lost cat or dog must be taken to a local council authorised officer.

Only vets or animal shelters holding a special agreement with their local council are currently allowed to contact the owner directly and reunite them with their pet. These outlets are often not easily identifiable by the public.

Animal Welfare Victoria is looking at changes that would allow lost cats and dogs dropped off at veterinary clinics or registered animal shelters to be reunited with their owners sooner.

The proposed reforms aim to reduce stress on animals and their owners, and reduce regulatory, administrative and resource burdens on councils, vet clinics and registered animal shelters. Community safety, privacy and the welfare of the animals will need to be carefully considered and protected.

Some of the problems associated with lost and roaming pets can include the animal's welfare, the welfare of other animals and wildlife, nuisance, property damage and human safety.

Additionally, if ownership data linked to an animal's microchip is not current, a vet may inadvertently contact and provide the pet to a previous owner.

This can compromise public safety through people on family violence orders attempting to locate others through pet microchip data or registration details.

An Issues Paper and survey questions for is now available online. Victorians are encouraged to have their say on the *Reuniting Lost Pets* review at: engage.vic.gov.au.

Victoria had approximately 663,000 dogs and 221,000 cats registered with its 79 councils in 2019.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"Losing a pet is an incredibly upsetting and stressful thing for anyone to go through – that's why we're looking at ways we can reunite people with their furry family members sooner."

"We also know that this reunification can't come at the expense of community expectations of responsible pet ownership."