

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



Wednesday, 6 October 2021

GETTING OUR LOST PETS HOME SOONER

The Victorian Government is delivering on its election commitment to make sure lost pets get returned home sooner, with legislation to be introduced in Parliament today.

The change means Victorians will soon be able to take a lost dog or cat to a participating vet clinic or registered animal shelter to be reunited with its owner, rather than relying on councils.

At present, lost cats and dogs must be handed in to an authorised officer in the council area where the animal is found, or to vets and shelters that have an agreement under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Surveys show just 23 per cent of vets have a contract with council to accept lost pets and as a result many animals are spending longer in pound and shelter facilities. The proposed reforms will:

- Allow shelters and participating vets to accept and reunite lost pets directly with their owners, with simple record keeping and reporting requirements
- Improve animal welfare by ensuring lost pets get home as quickly as possible
- Reduce burden on local councils, by allowing vets and shelters to assist with direct reunification services
- Improve operations for regulatory authorities, including the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Victoria and Greyhound Racing Victoria.

The *Domestic Animals Amendment (Reuniting Pets and Other Matters) Bill 2021* includes a robust verification process to ensure pets are returned to the correct owner.

It also identifies circumstances where pets should go to the council to protect public safety and animal welfare. This includes situations where an animal is declared dangerous or ownership cannot be verified.

These reforms are important as Victoria has high pet ownership rates, with an average of 665,000 dogs and 215,000 cats registered with councils each year.

Extensive consultation with community and stakeholders including veterinarians, councils, shelters, animal registry (microchip) services, rescue groups and community foster care networks was an important part of the process that led to the final form of the legislation.

The new arrangements will be in effect by 1 October 2022. For more information visit agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

“When a pet goes missing, it is stressful for the animal and its owners. This reform will make the reuniting of pets with their owners much easier and quicker, improving the welfare of all involved.”

“We will ensure that lost pets are reunited with their owners sooner and reduce the pressures placed on councils by allowing vet clinics and registered animal shelters to play a bigger part in the reunification process.”

Media contact: Nadia Dimattina 0438 701 306 | nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au