



ACT
Government

PROGRESS UPDATE

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO DOG
MANAGEMENT IN THE ACT

Transport Canberra and City Services
Directorate

April 2019



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Government Response to Independent Expert Review into Dog Management in the ACT

Panel Recommendation	2018 Government Response	Early 2019 Progress Update
<p>1 Consider suggestions provided by the panel for improving DAS standard operating procedures. The Panel noted that a review of DAS standard operating procedures found them to be generally robust, clear and informative.</p>	<p>Agree DAS standard operating procedures are being updated. All suggestions will be considered. A revised operating manual is currently being prepared for all DAS staff, and the panel recommendations will be considered in finalising this. This manual will be made publicly available.</p>	<p>Underway. A draft Operating Manual has been developed and is currently being consulted on internally. This will likely be made publicly available in mid-2019.</p>
<p>2 Consider development of a single manual to consolidate forms and standard operating procedures relating to DAS operations and responsibilities. It is recommended that this manual be made publicly accessible to improve transparency.</p>	<p>Agree As per recommendation 1 a single operating manual is currently being prepared. This will be a publicly available document.</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>3 DAS should foster productive partnerships with animal welfare and management groups, law enforcement agencies and other animal professionals.</p>	<p>Agree This will continue to occur. DAS is currently working closely with RSPCA on reform to the Animal Welfare Act and continues to foster relationships with a range of other stakeholders. DAS will 'open its doors' later this year in a DAS Open Day designed to encourage partnerships with stakeholders and the community. The community will also see more information about DAS and its staff and volunteers over coming months to encourage two-way engagement and the development of partnerships. DAS already has over 100 volunteers and has established relationships with a number of agencies. DAS has held a number of recent information stalls at key events, and at locations such as pet retailers, and will continue to do this.</p>	<p>Ongoing. Establishing and fostering productive partnerships with animal welfare and management groups is a key objective of the Canberra Dog Model. TCCS is still working closely with the RSPCA ACT and other stakeholders. The Animal Welfare Amendment Bill is close to being finalised and regular meetings are ongoing. This will include consideration of co-location of facilities in the future. Through consultation on the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill TCCS has met with a number of organisations to establish partnerships with key stakeholders. DAS has also developed an MoU with ACT Policing. The DAS Open Day is proposed for later in 2019, as facilities are currently under upgrade.</p>

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<p>4 Grants from non-government organisations and other philanthropic sources should be actively sought for specific programs to expand customer focused services and respond to issues outside of DAS budget constraints.</p>	<p>Noted DAS is continuing to work with key partners to explore alternate funding opportunities.</p>	<p>Ongoing. Following consultation on the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill, TCCS is proposing to establish working relationships with a number of non-government organisations and other stakeholders. DAS is continuing its focus on expanding its volunteer base as a way of actively expanding customer focused services beyond its existing resource base.</p>
<p>5 DAS should review processes to ensure they are customer service focused. For example, particular focus should be placed on ensuring victims of dog attacks are kept informed about the progress of investigations and the outcomes of decisions.</p>	<p>Agree This is currently underway. The new operating manual continues a strong focus on customer service. Customer service capabilities and training is now part of DAS recruitment and ongoing job requirements. The TCCS Licensing and Compliance Accountability Commitment has been published in conjunction with the review and has a strong focus on customer service. Investigation guidelines are also being developed and will be made publicly available so that people understand the process for investigations, consistent with the dangerous dog legislative amendments in December 2017.</p>	<p>See update to recommendation 1. Investigation guidelines will be developed following publication of the DAS Manual. This is expected to occur later in 2019.</p>
<p>6 DAS' Accountability Commitment should be finalised and made publicly available. The commitment should be updated with DAS contacts and include a clear escalated dispute resolution process for the community and people affected by dog attacks.</p>	<p>Agree As noted above, this Accountability Commitment has been published in conjunction with this response.</p>	<p>Completed. The Accountability Commitment will be regularly reviewed and updated as needed.</p>
<p>7 DAS staff should have a range of skills for responding to the community in a respectful and professional way. Ranger duty statements should be updated to include the importance of victim accountability and communication. Training should be provided to ensure rangers have the skills to fulfill these responsibilities.</p>	<p>Agree This is currently underway. See response to number 5 above.</p>	<p>Underway.</p>

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<p>8 DAS programs must be underpinned by evidence and include measurable targets that are reported on at least annually.</p>	<p>Agree DAS is currently undertaking a significant amount of work on improving its data collection and evidence base and will soon start regularly reporting on statistics. DAS reports against measurable targets (key performance indicators) annually in the Transport Canberra and City Services Annual Report.</p>	<p>Underway. The Canberra Model for dog management encompasses data improvements to be made in 2019, including the Pet Census to inform targeted service provision and new data capture systems to be introduced to DAS. New measurable targets will also be set as part of the Canberra Model.</p>
<p>9 Data collection needs to be systemised and regularly maintained to ensure a good baseline of information to measure progress of any DAS programs. This internal searchable database should be developed and maintained to report on the details and outcomes of dog attacks. This should include creation of a baseline dataset from previous records from at least the past 12 months.</p>	<p>Agree See response to number 8 above. DAS has been actively electronically capturing data from the past 12 months to provide an evidence-base moving forward.</p>	<p>Underway. The Canberra Model for dog management encompasses data improvements to be made in 2019, including the Pet Census to inform targeted service provision and new data capture systems to be introduced to DAS. New measurable targets will also be set as part of the Canberra Dog Model.</p>
<p>10 DAS should actively promote responsible pet ownership, including through incentivising responsible behaviours (e.g. regular registration of dogs, promoting the adoption or purchase of rescue dogs that have been paired with their new owners, desexing).</p>	<p>Agree Regular registration of dogs, rather than lifetime registration, is currently being considered by Government. DAS is undertaking a range of activities to promote and incentivise responsible pet ownership, and a comprehensive education and awareness strategy, based on the outcomes and recommendations of this review, has been developed for 2018-19. The community will be hearing and seeing more about DAS and the work it does, and DAS will open its doors to the community in the first DAS Open Day later this year. The community will see education and awareness campaigns on a range of responsible pet ownership issues in the ACT over the next year which will be followed by targeted compliance programs, starting with having effective control of your dog.</p>	<p>Underway An annual registration scheme is considered best practice and has been instrumental in reducing dog attacks and irresponsible pet ownership behaviours in jurisdictions around the world. Options for more regular registration are currently being explored to facilitate data capture and incentivisation. Substantial progress under the Canberra Dog Model will be made in 2019 including an Education and Awareness Strategy and new marketing campaign that will provide mechanisms for incentivising responsible pet ownership behaviours wherever possible, outside of a regular registration system. Some of this work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating a social media presence for DAS • Rebranding of DAS and the existing ‘Paws for Thought’ campaign • Branding DAS vehicles so people can see a DAS presence • Rollout of a preschool and prenatal education programs, consistent with other Australian jurisdictions

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<p>11 The ACT Government should consider the introduction of an annual registration for dogs.</p> <p>Any move towards an annual registration must clearly outline the value of registration and how revenue will be invested to improve management and welfare outcomes for dogs and their owners.</p> <p>Registration fees need to be market sensitive and based on what the community can comfortably pay and must reflect the quality of service that can be expected.</p> <p>Annual fees may be reduced for owners who have demonstrated responsible ownership (e.g. participation in puppy-preschool, desexing animals).</p>	<p>Now that the extra DAS rangers are on board, and with funding committed in the recent budget as well as new and stronger fines in place following the most recent legislative changes in April 2018, people can expect to be targeted and fined if they aren't following the rules. We encourage pet owners to become aware of their legal responsibilities and for people to report issues. Fact sheets have been developed and the website will be made more user friendly. Rangers will be out helping people to understand and comply with the rules, but a no-tolerance approach will be taken to those who continue to do the wrong thing.</p> <p>Noted Annual registration will be considered in future. This will include a thorough process of community consultation if Government decides to pursue this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating the DAS Website • Increased signage around Canberra and on Canberra buses • Awareness through the Pet Census • Increased presence of Rangers • Commencement of the Yellow Dog campaign, including free yellow items for owners of dogs that need space • Information packs for new dog owners • A free microchipping and registration day. <p>Underway</p> <p>An annual registration scheme is considered best-practice and has been instrumental in reducing dog attacks, and irresponsible pet ownership behaviours, in jurisdictions around the world.</p> <p>Under the Canberra Dog Model a more regular dog registration system will be investigated in 2019 to be implemented in 2021.</p>
<p>12 DAS should provide information on responsible procurement of pet dogs.</p> <p>When dogs are rehomed by DAS a formal pairing process should be undertaken. Follow-up checks after 30 days to ensure the new relationship is going well and to</p>	<p>Agree DAS provides a range of services to assist in appropriate rehoming of dogs, and will adopt the panel recommendations. Education and awareness is important for highlighting the importance of responsible pet procurement. An</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>Existing rehoming processes seek to match dogs and owner characteristics. Dogs may be surrendered to DAS if rehoming arrangements prove unsuitable.</p> <p>The Pet Census will ask a question about procurement of dogs to provide a baseline understanding of how dogs are procured in</p>

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<p>advise on any concerns should occur.</p>	<p>education and awareness strategy has been developed for 2018-19 which includes responsible procurement of pets.</p>	<p>the ACT, and to target actions based on this. Work is underway to improve information available about responsible procurement of dogs, including new dog packs for new owners.</p>
<p>13 DAS should introduce stronger regulations for people who breed dogs and strictly enforce any non-compliance.</p>	<p>Agree Recent legislative changes in December 2017 and April 2018 have resulted in much stronger regulations around illegal breeding. The number of rangers have been increased and targeted compliance programs will be undertaken for illegal breeding activities, and will form part of DAS' educate, engage and enforce model.</p>	<p>Underway DAS Field staff continue to investigate reports of illegal breeding under the legislation. Under the Canberra Dog Model the legal avenues for procuring dogs will be monitored and a zero-tolerance approach to illegal breeding will be taken.</p>
<p>14 DAS should consider the introduction of a reporting system that allows risky behaviours or welfare concerns to be reported and/or captured by professionals (e.g. dog trainers, vets). This could be an informal process and information could then be used to target education campaigns or recommend a form of intervention for individual dogs before behaviours progress and become more dangerous and eventually result in an attack.</p>	<p>Agree in principle The Government is supportive of introducing such a system and will work in partnership with key stakeholders, such as the veterinary industry, to consider how this could work effectively in the ACT context.</p>	<p>Ongoing. TCCS will commence conversations with the veterinary industry in 2019, including around the Pet Census. The Canberra Dog Model places a heavy focus on forming productive partnerships to work collaboratively with stakeholders.</p>
<p>15 DAS should consider the introduction of a system to identify dogs based on their training and sociability. This system can then be used to reward responsible pet owners and may be appropriate to grant access to public areas (e.g. out-door dining areas, or unregistered dogs in dog parks).</p>	<p>Agree in principle Being able to identify dogs based on their training and sociability can be an important tool in promoting and incentivising responsible pet ownership. Ways to implement and regulate such a system are currently being considered, and will be developed in partnership with the community.</p>	<p>The ACT will be implementing the Yellow Dog campaign that raises awareness, through visual cues, that some dogs may need space in public places for different reasons. These reasons range from health to behaviour to training or because the dog feels nervous around other dogs. This is intended to stop unwanted or risky interactions and serves as both a warning and an opportunity for education. This has been used successfully in many jurisdictions around the world. This will be rolled out in 2019 and will be supported by the new Education and Awareness Strategy and new marketing campaign.</p>

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<p>16</p> <p>DAS should regulate the use of leads over 2 metres in length, including retractable leads.</p> <p>Long (greater than 2 metres) and/or retractable leads should not be permitted as a method of controlling a dog in on-lead public spaces. An outright ban is not considered necessary, however owners using these leashes should be considered as having their dog 'off-lead' when on public property.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>This is currently being considered and a dog control survey is proposed to find out what the community think about dogs on and off-lead in the ACT.</p>	<p>The Canberra Dog Model recommends dog owners do not use leads of over 2 metres in length and revises off-leash areas in Canberra.</p> <p>Under the Canberra Dog Model a significant amount of community education and awareness work will be implemented, including around what constitutes effective control of a dog.</p> <p>Targeted consultation will occur with the community on regulating leash length to under 2 metres.</p>
<p>17</p> <p>DAS should develop and implement a targeted education campaign about the importance of responsible pet ownership, the benefits of regular registration to dogs and their owners and the consequences of non-compliance.</p> <p>Any campaign should target: dog owners; non-dog owning members of the community; school aged children; and the judiciary and associated professions.</p> <p>Campaigns should be based on demographics, baseline data and trends and must be underpinned by specific and targeted measurables.</p> <p>Prior to an education campaign, public consultation is required to understand public perception of issues and inform how these issues will be addressed. This improves community buy-in and participation.</p> <p>Any public relations campaign needs to be specific about how it will create a public value around DAS.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>A comprehensive education and awareness campaign has been developed for 2018/19 and incorporates the outcomes and recommendations of the expert review. Public consultation is also proposed through the dog control survey and will continue to occur (for example, through the Pet Census committed to by the Government for 2018/19). DAS wants to hear from the community, and will be opening its doors later this year. You will also be hearing more about the DAS team, including its volunteer team.</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>A dedicated Education and Awareness Officer is implementing the Pet Census in 2019 and rolling out an Education and Awareness Strategy as well as a new marketing campaign to promote responsible pet ownership. This is being undertaken under the principles and actions outlined in the Canberra Dog Model.</p>
<p>18</p> <p>Bite prevention programs for children and adults should be established and standardised.</p> <p>Programs should include information on what constitutes normal dog behaviour, how</p>	<p>Agree in principle</p> <p>The Government is currently investigating the rollout of bite prevention programs in pre-schools, schools and for expectant parents, consistent with other</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>TCCS expects to roll out education programs in preschools and prenatal centres in 2019, as part of the Education and Awareness Strategy.</p>

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<p>to interact with dogs safely and when involving children programs should be run regularly.</p> <p>19 The ACT Government should be active in promoting and facilitating the development of a national dangerous dog database that all states and territories participate in. The dangerous dog database should be interfaced with all relevant policing agencies.</p>	<p>jurisdictions in Australia. It is proposed to roll out programs in the near future. Bite prevention education will also be expanded in the ACT.</p> <p>Agree DAS has established a cross-jurisdictional working group across Australia. The idea of a national dog database has been discussed at this group. The ACT continues to lead cross-jurisdictional discussions, and work with partner States and Territories, and will continue to raise this issue in the future. A dangerous dog database, and the interfacing of this with relevant policing agencies, is being considered.</p>	<p>Ongoing TCCS is continuing conversations with States and Territories.</p>
<p>20 DAS should document and ensure a sophisticated approach for assessing whether an attacking or harassing dog is a danger to the community.</p> <p>This approach should ensure discretion in decision making and consider a number of factors on a case by case basis. Considerations should include whether the dog was reasonably provoked (e.g. invasion of yards by other animals).</p> <p>Attacks to humans should be assessed based on the severity of injury and individual circumstance.</p>	<p>Agree This is already occurring and will be formally adopted in the DAS operating manual.</p>	<p>Underway DAS Operating Manual being finalised and proposed for release in 2019.</p>
<p>21 The ACT Government (or relevant court) should have the ability to revoke a dangerous dog declaration if satisfied that the animal no longer poses a threat to the community.</p>	<p>Agree in principle Amendments to the regulatory framework are currently being considered. Any changes will need to carefully consider the need to ensure public safety and reflect community standards.</p>	<p>Currently being considered. No changes are proposed to the current regulatory system at this time, particularly given public safety is a key principle of the Canberra Dog Model.</p>

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22	DAS should provide information to support the responsible keeping of dangerous dogs.	Agree This will be actioned and information updated.	Underway An information flyer is available on TCCS webpage. Creation of further information and guidance will be considered, noting that the number of dangerous dogs has significantly decreased following the legislative changes in 2017.
23	Dangerous dog procedures should be made publicly available to increase transparency and community confidence in the process.	Agree This will form part of the operating manual currently being finalised, and will be publicly released.	See updates above. The DAS Operating Manual is proposed for release in 2019.
24	DAS should introduce a separate category of registration for hunting dogs. These dogs should be publicly identifiable (e.g. a coloured collar).	Noted This is being considered, and could be adopted as part of the current registration scheme. change may be	This will be considered as part of any future changes to the lifetime registration system in moving to annual registration.
25	The ACT Government should not introduce breed specific legislation.	Agree There is a strong evidence base to demonstrate that breed specific legislation is not effective in reducing dog attacks. The only jurisdictions to successfully reduce the incidence of dog attacks have not used breed specific legislation, but have instead used licensing/registration schemes and strong education and public awareness campaigns supported by compliance. The compliance framework has recently been updated with new and strong fines and enforcement capability.	No update required. Breed specific legislation is not proposed.
26	Immediate seizure of dogs involved in less serious attacks (i.e. Level 3 or below on the Dunbar Bite Assessment Scale) should only occur as a last resort. Where possible, seizure of dogs should be a last resort. Actively working to reduce the length of impoundment will help to reduce costs to DAS and improve animal welfare outcomes. For example, dogs involved in animal incidents should be controlled but with the option for owner retention under conditions.	Agree in principle The panel noted that home impoundment, which was introduced through the dangerous dog legislative amendments in December 2017 and strengthened with the legislative changes in April 2018, has been a positive and commendable step. DAS will reflect the recommendations of the panel in relation to seizure and home impoundment in DAS operating procedures, where appropriate, to avoid impoundment wherever possible and in the interests of public safety. Strong fines and compliance action can be taken for the breach of a home impoundment order.	Underway This is being implemented already through home impoundment. The DAS Operating Manual is proposed for release in 2019.

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27	<p>Home quarantine eligibility and conditions should be proportionate to the incident. For dogs involved in an attack that results in a Level 4 bite, conditions should be as detailed and limiting as those that would be applied should a dog be declared dangerous (i.e. a conservative approach). To reduce the short-term financial burden on owners DAS should consider renting dangerous dog enclosures to owners who are subject to home quarantine conditions.</p>	<p>Agree in principle This will be considered and formalised in DAS processes where appropriate. See also response to number 26 above.</p>	<p>Underway See updates above. The DAS Operating Manual is proposed for release in 2019.</p>
28	<p>DAS should remove barriers to relinquishment of animals (e.g. costs, appointments, or any other limitation).-Consideration should be given to options to partner with rescue groups for relinquished dogs as an alternative to impounding them at DAS facilities.</p>	<p>Agree Recent legislative changes on 30 April 2018 gave effect to this by allowing for DAS to impound an animal with an animal rescue facility.</p>	<p>Underway Fees for relinquishment are regularly waived at the moment, taking into account people's circumstances. Changes to reduce the fees are currently being considered, which can be given effect by changing the Disallowable Instrument for DAS Fees rather than legislative change. The TCCS website has also been updated to better inform the community about relinquishment and fee waivers.</p>
29	<p>Investigation processes, including the dog attack workflow, should be reviewed with the aim of standardising and streamlining the process. Of note: DAS should continue to use the Dunbar Bite Assessment Scale as a consistent approach to clarify incident and assist in decision making.</p> <p>Standard operating procedures should be updated to ensure all dog attack victims are offered the opportunity to complete a victim impact statement.</p> <p>Where possible, investigation processes should take no longer than four weeks.</p>	<p>Agree This is currently underway. A single operating manual is in preparation and will be made publicly available and reflect the recommendations of the Panel. Investigation guidelines are also currently in preparation. DAS aims to complete investigations within 4 weeks wherever possible, but recognises that some investigations may take longer depending on the complexity of issues. This will be reflected in the investigation guidelines. All dog attack victims are offered the opportunity to complete a victim impact statement, and participate in the investigation process where appropriate.</p>	<p>Underway See updates above. The DAS Operating Manual is proposed for release in 2019 and investigation guidelines are under development.</p>
30	<p>Dog owners should have the option of commissioning an independent behavioural/temperament assessment of a dog that has been involved in an</p>	<p>Agree This is already provided for, but will be formalised in DAS processes and procedures so that it is clear to dog owners that they have this option.</p>	<p>See updates above. The DAS Operating Manual is proposed for release in 2019.</p>

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<p>attack and is being investigated by DAS.</p>		
<p>31 DAS should consider the use of DNA evidence in dog attacks to link the dog to the attack.</p> <p>Dog owners should also be given the option to avail themselves of DNA technology to defend dog attack allegations.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>DNA evidence is used where appropriate and in serious cases. However, this is expensive, difficult to use and not appropriate in every case. Dog owners will be given the option to use DNA evidence and this will be reflected in DAS processes and procedures.</p>	<p>See updates above. The DAS Operating Manual is proposed for release in 2019.</p>
<p>32 The process for internal review should be clearly outlined in Standard Operating Procedures to ensure it is accessible to people affected by dog attacks.</p> <p>- A recommended option is to provide information on how to request a review of the Senior Deputy Registrar's initial decision prior to a final decision by the Registrar.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>DAS processes and procedures will be updated to reflect this, and information will be made publicly available. Internal review is already available and successfully used as part of the Regulatory Advisory Committee (RAC) process. However, this will be formalised so dog owners are aware of the process.</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>See updates above. The DAS Operating Manual is proposed for release in 2019.</p>
<p>33 Escalating and/or alternative enforcement measures should be considered and adopted by DAS where appropriate.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>The fine framework has recently been updated to allow for escalating enforcement, as well as the recent legislative changes in December 2017 and April 2018 which allow for a range of other enforcement mechanisms (e.g. cancellation of a person's dog registration and seizure of a dog). However, consideration will continue to be given to flexibility in enforcement measures to achieve good outcomes.</p>	<p>Ongoing. A new dedicated compliance team is being implemented in 2019.</p>
<p>34 The ACT Government should commit to following the process outlined above, adapted as appropriate for the Canberra community, in order to undertake meaningful engagement and develop the 'Canberra Model' to improve outcomes for dogs, their owners and the broader community.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>DAS will adopt this process as part of all future initiatives, including the education and awareness campaign currently in development. It is considered that this recommendation is a good blueprint to use to put the ACT on track to be a world leader in dog management. A dog control survey has been released in conjunction with this response, and a Pet Census will take place later this year. DAS encourages feedback and ideas, and the community will be seeing and hearing a lot more about DAS in coming months.</p>	<p>Underway.</p> <p>The Canberra Dog Model is intended for release in mid-2019 and will guide all dog management activities into the future for a safer, more pet-friendly Canberra. The Canberra Model is based on evidence, such as from the Review, academic research and case studies from successful jurisdictions. The Pet Census will be undertaken in the first half of 2019.</p>



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April 2019