ACT GOVERNMENT

The Canberra Dog Model and New Animal Welfare Amendment Bill

'In order for Canberra to become an international leader where animals are responsibly managed and successfully integrated into everyday life, the ACT Government needs to understand what drives Canberrans, and ultimately what the 'Canberra Model' looks like'

ACT Government
Transport Canberra and City Services

October 2019

Background - Independent Expert Review and Animal Welfare and Management Strategy 2017-22


Vision: ACT becomes an Australian leader in animal welfare and management practice

- The Animal Welfare and Management Strategy 2017-22 (the Strategy) sets out tangible actions designed to bring the ACT in line with five key animal welfare and management objectives.

- Since releasing the Strategy, the ACT Government has comprehensively reviewed the two primary pieces of legislation behind the ACT's animal welfare and management.

- The Review presented 34 recommendations, one of which being the development of the Canberra Dog Model, with the ultimate goal being to become a national and international leader in dog management.

Why a 'Canberra Model'?

According to the Review, 'in order for Canberra to become an international leader where animals are responsibly managed and successfully integrated into everyday life, the ACT Government needs to understand what drives Canberrans, and ultimately what the 'Canberra Model' looks like.'

- While the basic principles of reducing dog attacks and improving animal management remain fundamentally the same, the Review acknowledges that the unique context of each jurisdiction requires a tailored approach.

- The six steps to becoming a world leader in animal management (particularly dog management) used to reform the city of Calgary can be applied to the ACT, however the specific policies, procedures and legislative changes implemented in Calgary will not necessarily be relevant to Canberra.

- The Review recommended Canberra develop its own model for dog management based on the same principles used by Calgary.

The Canberra Dog Model

Responsible dog ownership for a safer, more pet-friendly community

ACT Government

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate
May 2019
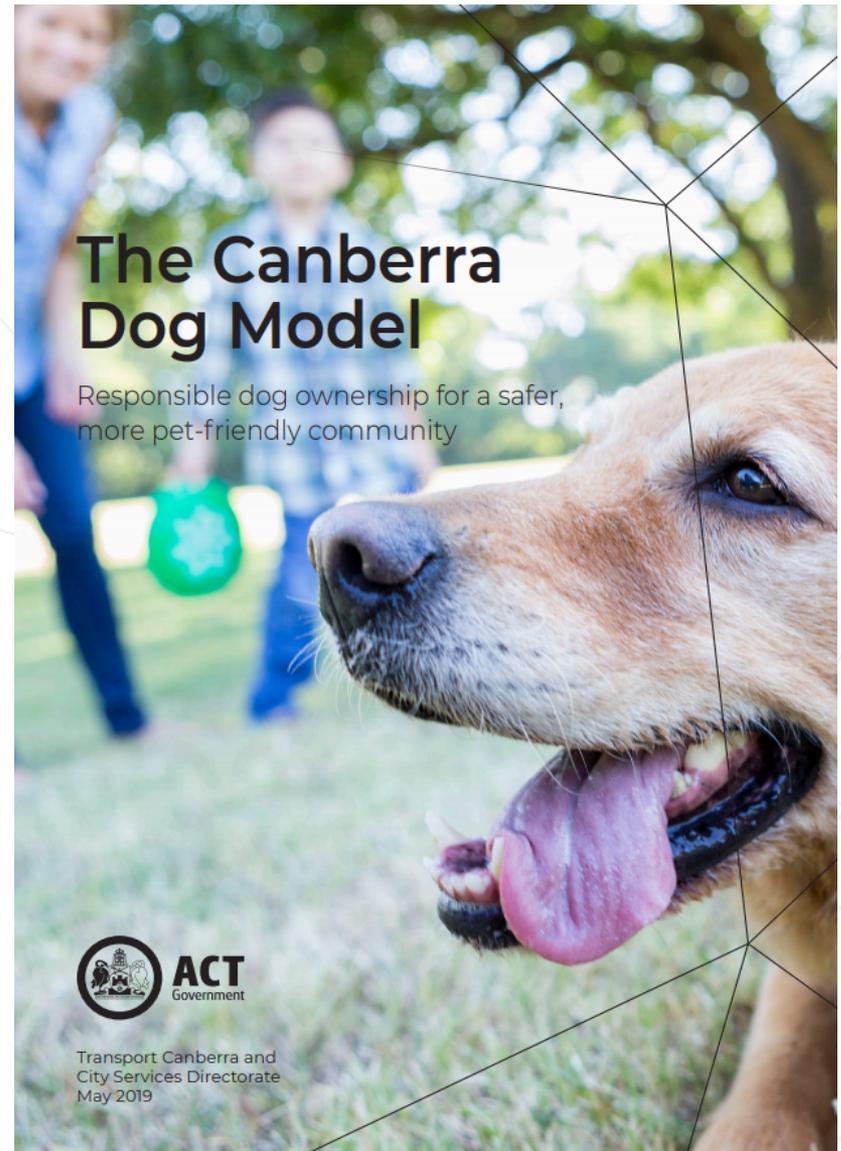
The Canberra Dog Model

- The Minister for City Services released the Canberra Dog Model in May 2019.

- The Canberra Dog Model is based on three key principles
  - community safety
  - responsible dog ownership
  - animal welfare

The Canberra Dog Model is based on a strategic and evidence-based approach combining education and awareness of responsible dog ownership with compliance and clear rules

RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERS ARE REWARDED

ALL DOG OWNERS ARE RESPONSIBLE

RULES ARE CLEAR

PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

COMPLIANCE IS ENFORCED

AN EDUCATED COMMUNITY

RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP

A SAFE COMMUNITY

CANBERRA DOG MODEL

ANIMAL WELFARE

EMPOWERING CANBERRANS THROUGH RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP FOR A SAFER, MORE PET-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY.

Actions

A new marketing campaign to promote responsible dog ownership as part of a new Education and Awareness Strategy;

Targeted education and awareness programs aimed at children and young families on how to be safe around dogs, which is a proven way to reduce attacks and improve community safety;

A new dedicated compliance team in City Services was rolled out in June 2019 and is focusing on key areas of responsible dog ownership such as not having a dog under effective control or not picking up after your dog;

Off-leash area changes were launched in July to ensure the community is clear on where dogs can and can't be off-leash;

Dog de-sexing programs in partnership with the RSPCA ACT;

Actions continued…

 Free dog microchipping and registration days;

 Launching the Yellow Dog campaign for dogs that need space (e.g anxiety);

 A pet census was conducted in the first half of the year to better understand dog ownership in Canberra and target services to where they are needed;

 Annual registration to commence in 2020-21 at no additional cost to the existing upfront registration fee; and

 Other incentivisation initiatives to encourage and reward responsible dog ownership.

The New Animal Welfare Bill

- The ACT Government released the draft Animal Welfare Amendment Bill in December 2018 to fulfil an action under the Strategy.

- The Bill aims to amend the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* to better align with community expectations and best-practice.

- The Bill was passed in the Legislative Assembly in September and most of the Bill came into effect last week.

- Pet Business and Assistance Animal Frameworks are being developed and will come into effect in April 2020.
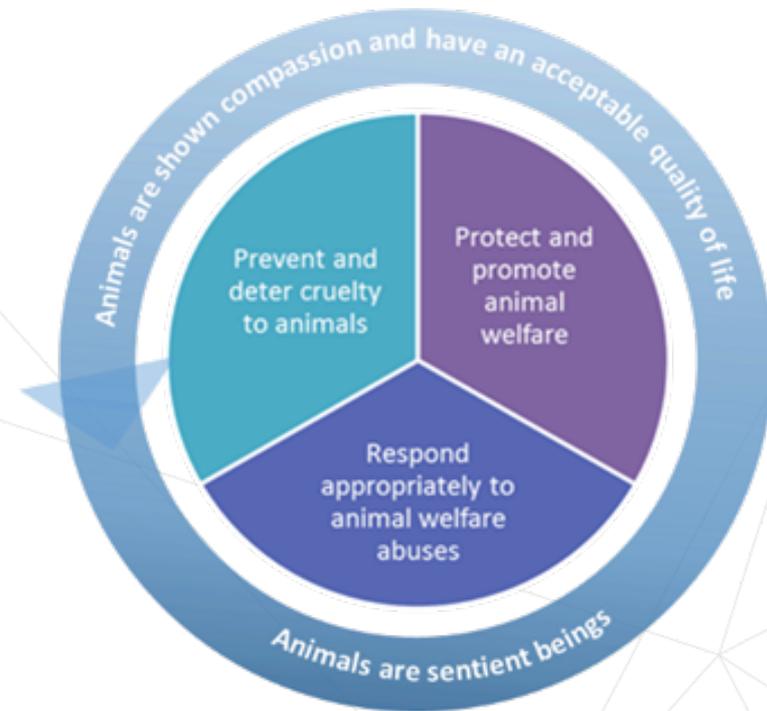
What do the new laws do?

- Update the objects of the Act to reflect contemporary views on animal welfare, including recognition of animals as sentient beings

- Amend governance framework for the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC)

- Set out a high-level framework for regulating pet business, and specifically pet shops and boarding kennels

- Set out a high-level regulatory framework for assistance animals in the ACT

- Improved animal ownership bans, including immediate prohibition order

- Require a person to report the injury of an animal that is a mammal within 2 hours

What do the new laws do? (cont.)

- Introduce provisions that expressly address dog fighting and violent animal activities that ensure the prohibition of pig-dogging and other similar activities where an animal is used to intentionally injure or kill another animal

- Expressly make it an offence for a person to leave an animal in a hot care or in other circumstances where an animal is in serious danger

- Amend a number of existing offences to make these offences strict liability and to update penalty amounts and infringement notices where appropriate

- Comprehensive fine framework

The ACT has become the first jurisdiction in Australia to recognise animals as sentient beings, becoming an Australian leader in animal welfare and management practice
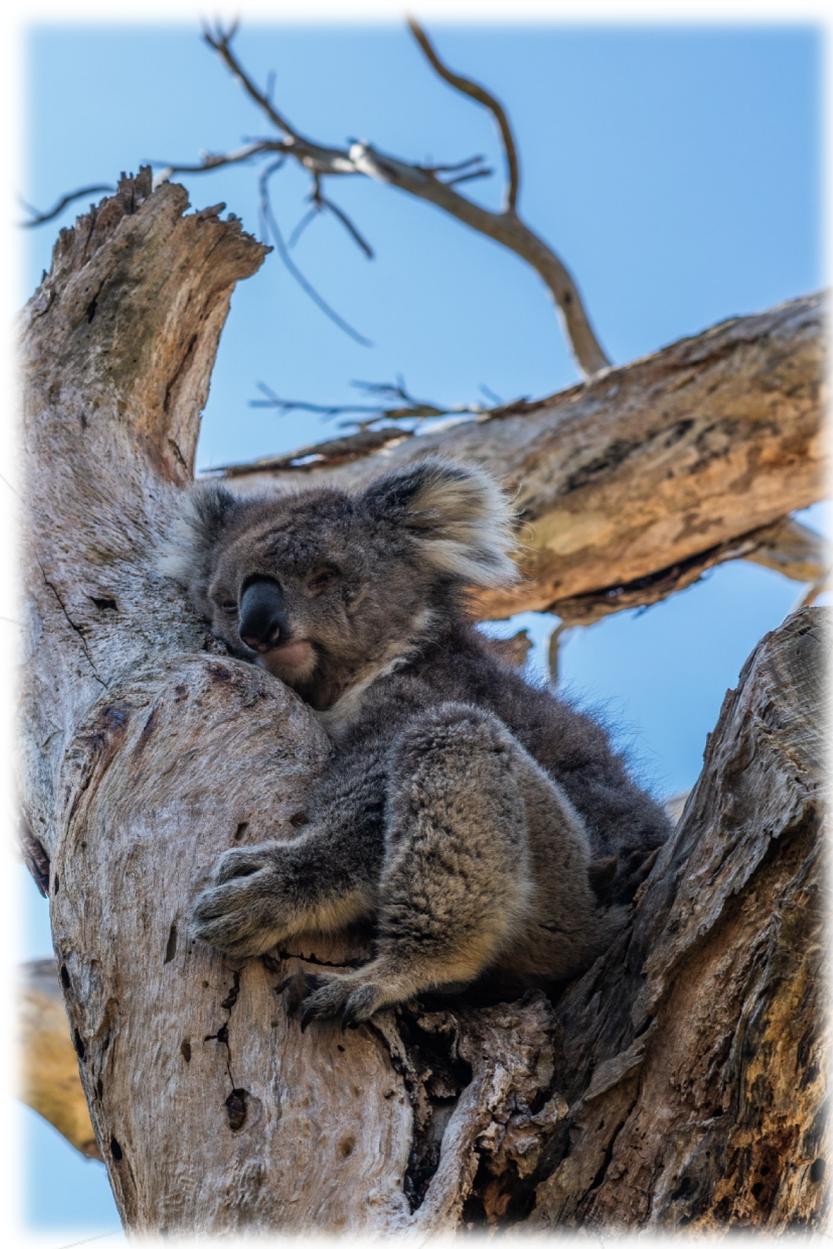
Continuous Improvement

- Continuous improvement requires an in-depth understanding of what the community want and how Government policies, procedures and processes are actually playing out in the Canberra context.

- This also includes continually identifying and responding to issues, consistent with the six step process, which are;

  - identifying issues
  - engaging the community
  - develop regulatory processes that work
  - educate the community
  - demonstrate the consequences of non-compliance
  - measure and undertake continuous improvement activities

- Embrace evolution of approach to dog management

- Fluid and responsive

'Baseline information and data on dogs living in the ACT is required to determine the effectiveness of DAS operations and to underpin continuous improvement' - The Review

Summary

- Significant work has been undertaken in the animal welfare and management space since 2017, but we still have a way to go.

- The Animal Welfare and Management Strategy 2017-22 acts as a foundation to the majority of work undertaken, including the comprehensive reviews of the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* and the *Animal Welfare Act 1992.*

- The Canberra Model is intended to place a stronger focus on dog management following expert advice from the Independent Expert Review into the Management of Dogs in the ACT.

- The Review recommends a balance between regulation and enforcement and education and awareness, with tools and techniques such as good data capture supporting this balance.

- The Review acknowledges DAS has the will to be the best and provides a roadmap to achieving this goal.

- The ultimate goal of the Canberra Model is to guide the ACT towards becoming a national and international leader in dog management.

- The new Animal Welfare Act will allow the ACT to impose stronger fines and restrictions on animal welfare abuses.
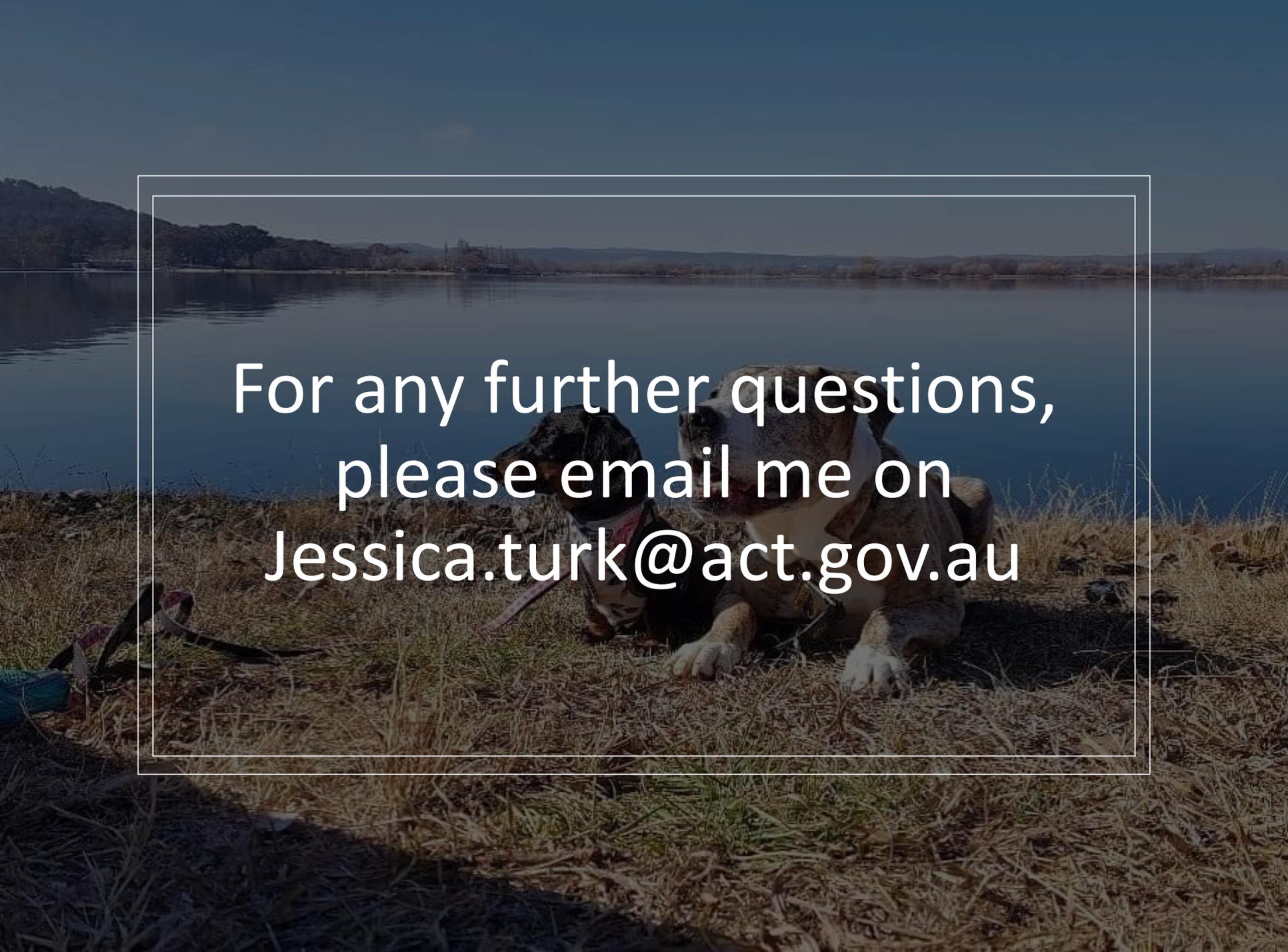
For any further questions, please email me on Jessica.turk@act.gov.au