National Strategy to Reduce the Risk and Harm of Dog Attacks

Portfolio  Associate Local Government

On 14 September 2016, the Cabinet Economic Growth and Infrastructure Committee (EGI):

1. **noted** that the central objective of dog control policy in New Zealand is to strike an appropriate balance between the advantages to individuals and communities of dog ownership and the protection of individuals and communities from dog attacks;

2. **noted** that the Associate Minister of Local Government considers that the current settings of the Dog Control Act 1996 do not maximise the ability to achieve both these objectives to the extent possible;

3. **noted** the Associate Minister of Local Government’s proposal to progress a national strategy comprising of both legislative and non-legislative measures to reduce the risk and harm of dog attacks in New Zealand;

**Legislative measures**

4. **agreed** to include a Dog Control Amendment Bill on the 2016 Legislation Programme with a category 6 (drafting instructions to be issued to Parliamentary Counsel in 2016);

5. **noted** that:

   5.1 it is expected that the Bill will be introduced in February 2017;

   5.2 the Associate Minister of Local Government will seek a category 3 priority on the 2017 Legislation Programme (to be passed in 2017 if possible) at the appropriate time;

6. **agreed** that the Bill will:

   6.1 require all dogs classified as menacing to be neutered;

   6.2 require dogs classified as menacing to be securely fenced within private property;

   6.3 require mandatory signage on properties with menacing and dangerous dogs;

   6.4 require dogs classified as menacing and dangerous to wear identification collars;

   6.5 prohibit the re-homing of menacing and dangerous dogs;
invited the Associate Minister of Local Government to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the decisions set out in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5 above;

authorised the Associate Minister of Local Government to make decisions on any subsequent minor issues arising from legislative drafting consistent with the overall policy intent;

Non-legislative measures

noted that for the legislative measures to be fully effective in reducing the risk and harm of dog attacks, non-legislative measures are required before and alongside changes to the Dog Control Act;

noted that compliance with the proposed legislative measures will create resource implications for local authorities and owners of high-risk dogs, while producing significant public benefit through the reduced risk and harm of dog attacks;

agreed to fund a nationwide subsidy of neutering fees for high-risk menacing dogs, which would take effect immediately ahead of legislative changes to the Dog Control Act to:

11.1 lower aggression in the high-risk menacing dog population in the short-term, decreasing the immediate harm caused by dog attacks;

11.2 reduce the supply of high-risk menacing dogs over the long-term, lowering the prevalence of dog attacks;

11.3 encourage the uptake of regulatory compliance among the owners of high-risk menacing dogs, in order to successfully target future initiatives;

noted that the local government sector will proceed with a review of best practice guidance in dog control for territorial authorities, to improve the delivery of services based on the most recent local and international evidence;

Financial recommendations
Further details on proposals for consideration in November 2016

20 noted that the Associate Minister of Local Government will report to EGI in November 2016 with further details on proposals to:

20.1 introduce a licensing system for owners of classified dogs;

20.2 adjust the current infringement regime to allow councils to take greater punitive action against irresponsible owners;

20.3 improve the quality of data about dog attacks;

21 noted that the Department and other government agencies will work with the local government sector to develop a proposal, to be considered by EGI in November 2016, for nationwide public education campaigns in 2017 and 2018 on:

21.1 socially-responsible dog ownership, including new owner requirements based on the proposed legislative changes;

21.2 dog behaviour and interacting safely with dogs;
Next steps

22 agreed that the Associate Minister of Local Government announce the national strategy and Cabinet’s decisions at the annual conference of the New Zealand Institute of Animal Management on 22 September 2016, and issue a media release shortly thereafter;

23 noted that the Associate Minister of Local Government will make the submission under EGI-16-SUB-0241 and associated minutes publicly available on the Department’s website.

Committee Secretary

Present:
Rt Hon John Key
Hon Bill English (Chair)
Hon Steven Joyce
Hon Paula Bennett (part of item)
Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman
Hon Amy Adams
Hon Dr Nick Smith
Hon Nathan Guy
Hon Michael Woodhouse
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Pepesta Sam Lotu-liga
Hon Nicky Wagner
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Te Ururoa Flavell

Officials present from:
Office of the Prime Minister
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Office of the Chair
Office of the Minister for the Environment
Office of the Minister for ACC
Office of the Minister of Local Government
Department of Internal Affairs
 Officials Committee for EGI

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