



## Statement

Walgett Shire Council has become aware that considerable public interest has been generated in relation to a recent dog control problem at Collarenebri. In response to that public interest, the following statement has been prepared in relation to the particular circumstances and Council's subsequent actions.

- Council has had ongoing complaints from local communities regarding dogs wandering town streets and creating a nuisance.
- Council staff had observed a male black Labrador dog periodically wandering the streets in Collarenebri for at least two months.
- On 6 and 13 December 2012 garbage bins had been knocked over on the street adjoining the property where the Labrador lived.
- On Thursday 20-12-2012 Council staff saw the Labrador knocking over and rummaging through at least four bins on the street adjoining the property where it lived. There was rubbish scattered over a significant area within the street and in the yard of the animal's home. A Council staff member approached the animal's owner to discuss the fact that the Labrador had knocked over bins, but she declined to enter into a conversation about the issue. As a result the problem was referred to Council's Regulatory Officer for follow up action.
- On the morning of Friday 21-12-2012 Council's Regulatory Officer spoke with the animal's owner. She was informed that Council was considering issuing a warning letter and/or infringement notice because there was evidence that the animal was causing an ongoing public nuisance. She was also informed that she could surrender the dog. The owner then chose to voluntarily surrender the dog and signed a surrender form.
- Although the animal appeared to be about twelve months old it had not been microchipped or registered as required by legislation.
- Given that the animal was surrendered and Council could not identify a potential new owner, it was euthanised around midday on 21-12-2012.
- On the afternoon of Friday 21-12-2012 Council's Regulatory Officer received a phone call from the animal's owner inquiring about the dog. She was incorrectly advised that it had been found a new home. Although the intent of the Officer's advice was to avoid distressing the owner, it is acknowledged that such a statement was inappropriate and the Regulatory Officer has been counselled in relation to this aspect of his handling of the matter. Council has also sent a letter of apology to the dog owner.

- A second dog, a fox terrier, was also picked up by Council's Regulatory Officer at the residence of the owner of the black Labrador on 21-12-2012. This animal was also not microchipped or registered and was thin, lethargic and infested with fleas and ticks. Because this animal was effectively in a diseased and distressed state, it was euthanised under section 22 of the Impounding Act 1993 on the day that it was picked up.
- Council will now undertake a review of its animal control procedures to ensure that it is meeting the community's expectations that animals within urban environments are effectively controlled and that the procedures are appropriate within the broader context of Council's operating environment and available resources.
- Council is also currently undertaking a comprehensive community engagement program as part of the review of its Community Strategic Plan which provides an opportunity for residents to provide feedback and comment on the entire spectrum of Council's operations including animal control.

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Walgett Shire Council  
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