ORDINARY MEETING 28 OCTOBER 2026	5.9

FREE REGISTRATION FOR AGED PENSIONERS AND GUIDE, HEARING AND ASSISTANCE DOGS – GENERAL POLICY UPDATE

L&C | 52/2/4-02 | #7955832

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopts the Free Registration for Aged Pensioners and Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs – General Policy

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INTERESTED PARTIES:

Nil

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report seeks Council's adoption of the updated Free Registration for Aged Pensioners and Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs – General Policy. The intent of this policy is to provide clear guidelines and assessment criteria for issuing free registration for dogs owned by aged pensioners (or other pension card holders who would otherwise be eligible for the aged pension) and for guide, hearing and assistance dogs.

BACKGROUND:

Originally adopted in 2005, the Free Registration for Aged Pensioners and Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs – General Policy stipulates criteria against which applications for free registration for dogs owned by aged pensioners (or other pension card holders that would otherwise be eligible for the aged pension), and for guide, hearing and assistance dogs, are considered and assessed. Eligible applicants who are approved may receive up to three years of complimentary dog registration, with the registration renewable every three years thereafter, subject to eligibility criteria continuing to be met and conditions remaining unchanged.

Following a review of the policy and the relevant legislations, Council Officers identified the need to modernise the policy and assessment criteria to ensure the policy continues to meet its overall intent.

COMMENT:

The Policy has effectively supported the provision of free dog registration for eligible age pensioners and owners of guide, hearing and assistance dogs since its introduction in 2005. However, a review of the relevant legislation identified the need to update the policy to ensure alignment with contemporary definitions, terminology and legislative requirements.

The revised policy provides greater clarity regarding the evidence that may be submitted to demonstrate that a dog is a recognised guide, hearing or assistance dog. It also adopts a more contemporary and inclusive approach, improving accessibility for individuals who rely on support dogs while ensuring the policy remains consistent with current legislative and community expectations.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended)

That Council adopts the Free Registration for Aged Pensioners and Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs – General Policy.

Option 2

That Council does not adopt the proposed Free Registration for Aged Pensioners and Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs – General Policy at this time and requests officers to provide further information.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Adoption of the policy provides a clear and transparent process for Council to assess and approve eligible applications for free dog registration for pensioners and guide, hearing and assistance dogs. A formal policy position provides protection against reputational risk by ensuring this concession is made available to those who meet the clearly defined criteria which is aligned with the relevant legislation.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

It is not anticipated that the policy update will have any significant additional financial implications. Clearly defined assessment criteria assist Council Officers in ensuring the concession is only approved for eligible applicants.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The proposed Policy supports the following pillars of Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2030:

Focus 3: Design for liveability - *A place-based approach that celebrates our community*

- Promote a vibrant community that supports wellbeing, safety and resilience

Focus 5: Focussed Council - *Delivering for community through strong governance and informed decision-making*

- Informed decision-making that is collaborative, transparent and accountable

Statutory:

The proposed Policy supports Council's compliance with the relevant legislative frameworks including:

- *Guide Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*

CONSULTATION:

Consultation was undertaken with key internal stakeholders to identify necessary amendments to the policy and assess any operational, administrative or service delivery impacts arising from the proposed changes.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Free Registration for Aged Pensioners and Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs – General Policy (DM 955670 - tracked changes).



Andrew Moore
Executive Manager Community Life



Tim Dendle
A/Director Lifestyle & Community

Attachment 1 - Free Registration for Aged Pensioners and Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs – General Policy (DM 955670 - tracked changes).

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

General Policy

FREE REGISTRATION FOR AGED PENSIONER'S DOGS AND GUIDE, HEARING AND ASSISTANCE DOGS

Intent To provide clear guidelines and assessment criteria for issuing free registration for dogs owned by aged pensioners (or other pension card holders who would otherwise be eligible for the aged pension) and for guide, hearing and assistance dogs.

Scope This policy shall apply to the assessment of all applications for free registration of dogs owned by aged pensioners (or other pension card holders that would otherwise be eligible for the aged pension), and for guide, hearing and assistance dogs.

Definitions Definitions as set out in *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008*

https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2008-074

PROVISIONS

General
All applications for free registration will be assessed by Council Officers. If approved, the free registration will be for a period of up to three (3) years.

Assessment Criteria
Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Aged Pensioner Dogs

- Presentation of a certificate from a veterinary surgeon or extract of microchip register, showing the dog is microchipped and the number (or if relevant, a signed veterinary surgeon's certificate for the dog stating that implanting it is likely to be a serious risk to the health of the dog);
- Provision of a certificate or statement from a veterinarian that the dog is desexed;
- Proof the dog is owned and kept by an aged pensioner by provision of an aged pensioner card (or equivalent card of a person who would otherwise be eligible to hold an aged pension card);

Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs

- Presentation of a certificate from a veterinary surgeon or extract of microchip register, showing the dog is microchipped and the number (or if relevant, a signed veterinary surgeon's certificate for the dog stating that implanting it is likely to be a serious risk to the health of the dog);
- Provision of a certificate or statement from a veterinarian that the dog is desexed;
- Evidence that the dog is a guide, hearing or assistance dog, including:
  - a Queensland Guide, Hearing or Assistance Dog Handler Identity Card identifying both the handler and the dog.
  - evidence that the dog is certified under the *Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009* (Qld); or
  - evidence that the dog is certified or accredited under a law of another Australian state or territory.

- If the recognised assistance animal evidence listed above is not available, Council may consider other types of documented evidence that clearly demonstrates each of the following:
    - the person has a disability and the dog assists in alleviating the effect of that disability.
    - the dog is trained to perform tasks or functions that provide that assistance; and

  the dog meets appropriate standards of behaviour and hygiene for access to a public place.

Any application not complying with the assessment criteria will be referred to the Executive Manager Community Life for consideration, assessment and decision.

Approval

A Registration Notice will be issued for the dog, covering up to a three-year registration period. A registration tag will also be provided as evidence of the dog's registration status for this period. The dog's details, including the microchip number, animal identification number and registration tag number, will be recorded and maintained within Council's records management system.

Current registration period 1 April 2026 to 30 March 2029
Next registration period 1 April 2029 to 30 March 2032

A Renewal Notice will be issued to the owner at the end of the registration period. Upon receipt of the completed Renewal Notice, Council will update its records to identify the dog as being registered for a further three (3) year period.

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This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

Director Responsible for Review: **Lifestyle & Community**

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 24/02/2005
CURRENT ADOPTION: TBC
DUE FOR REVISION: TBC
REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

Ken Gouldthorp
Chief Executive Officer

DRAFT