

WILL THE NSW PET REGISTRY INTEGRATE WITH PET ADDRESS?

"The NSW Companion Animals Register is a State Government database provided for councils to record registration information of NSW's cats and dogs. It records only NSW council registrations and is not a national register of microchips or owners," said Ms Clark.

"With animal welfare as a key objective, the NSW Government attempts to help interstate authorities to reunite lost animals by contacting owners where information from NSW council registration information is available. People moving pets interstate are advised to contact their local council/authority regarding pet registration requirements within that state or territory and to list their pet's microchip with one of the commercial microchip registers."

"In addition to a broader suite of legislative reforms, the NSW Government is developing additional functions for the NSW Pet Registry and is committed to future information sharing and cross-jurisdictional engagement to reunite lost pets and reduce euthanasia rates."

SOUTH AUSTRALIA MAKES MICROCHIPPING MANDATORY

Following in NSW's footsteps, the South Australian government has passed legislation making it mandatory to register microchips with a state-wide, one-stop online pet information portal that replaces individual council registers, called Dogs and Cats Online (DACO).

As of 1 July 2018, all owned dogs and cats must be microchipped (and desexed, with exemptions applied) and registered with Dogs and Cats Online, among some other legal requirements. Until now microchipping (and desexing) has been voluntary for most dogs and cats.

Microchipping rates were increasing for many years but then plateaued, said Andrew Lamb, Secretary of the South Australian Dog and Cat Management Board.

"About 70% of registered dogs and a similar number of registered cats have been microchipped. Unfortunately, 70% of dogs and cats arriving at shelters and pounds aren't microchipped. Making microchipping mandatory is a way to

increase microchipping rates, increase the percentage of lost pets that are safely returned home and to reduce euthanasia rates," said Mr Lamb.

"Changes to legislation will require vets or microchip implanters to upload details directly into Dogs and Cats Online, which will significantly increase the percentage of pets whose microchip details are stored."

Mr Lamb said the Bill received widespread support from most stakeholders, including councils, breeders, pet industry groups, the Australian Veterinary Association, breeder associations such as purebred dog and cat breeding associations, and working livestock dog groups.

Plus, a survey done during the 10-week consultation period showed over 85% of the public were supportive of the changes.

"Pet owners can still keep their microchips details stored on another registry, we have no intention of stopping that," he said.

"The first version of Dogs and Cats Online won't have the functionality of sharing data with other private-sector microchip registries, partly because of privacy issues. As a government body, we have strict rules preventing the disclosure of personal information."

Pet Address will tell you that a dog or cat's microchip details are recorded in any other database within the Pet Address network.

"We'd like to explore those sorts of arrangements for future versions of Dogs and Cats Online," said Mr Lamb. "Unfortunately, there are some microchip databases not in the Pet Address network and that's why we decided to have a compulsory database in South Australia, bringing together all of the information."

Dogs and Cats Online will be a central location for all dog registration payments, dog and cat microchipping details,

desexing assistance animals, racing greyhounds and registered breeder information. It will permanently connect animals with their breeder or seller so that if the owner cannot be found, Dogs and Cats Online will enable authorities to contact the breeder or seller of the pet, explained Mr Lamb.

"Dogs and Cats Online will also record more information about the circumstances leading to dog attacks. This will help us make better decisions about preventing dog attacks," he said. Also, information about dog control orders and dog attack incidents will stay with the dog, even if the owner moves to a new council area, he added.

"All the information about dog and cat management will for the first time be stored together on one database, which will make it a valuable tool for insuring compliance with the new laws. Our system has been designed with the input of all key stakeholders and we believe it to be the best dog and cat management tool in Australia. We encourage other states and territories to join or integrate with Dogs and Cats Online," said Mr Lamb.

If other states and territories join the South Australian Dogs and Cats Online, would the state microchip registration system muddy the waters or would it help create the national database that many pet industry groups prefer?

Not everyone agrees about where pets should be registered, but they all say we need to all work together to bridge the gap between implanting microchips and getting pets registered. The ultimate goal is to get our lost pets safely and quickly back home, where they belong.

It really is a team effort – the breeder, the owner, the veterinarian, the council, the registries – it's everybody's responsibility. After all, we know pets like going on holidays, too! ■

COMPULSORY MICROCHIP LEGISLATION

ACT	Yes for dogs and cats	TAS	Yes for dogs and cats
NSW	Yes for dogs and cats	VIC	Yes (as a condition of registration) for dogs and cats
NT	No		
QLD	Yes for dogs and cats		
SA	Yes (as of 1 July 2018) for dogs and cats	WA	Yes for dogs and cats

SOURCE: RSPCA AUSTRALIA (FEB 2018)