



Rehoming Pets Reform

Engagement summary – Regulatory framework for
Victoria’s pet rehoming sector

Animal Welfare Victoria

August 2024

Acknowledgement

Animal Welfare Victoria acknowledges the traditional Aboriginal Owners of Country throughout Victoria, and their ongoing connection to this land and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

Introduction

The Victorian Government recognises the valuable services provided by Victoria’s pet rehoming sector and is committed to supporting the sector to continue delivering its important work.

As part of this commitment, the government is implementing the 17 recommendations of the [Taskforce on Rehoming Pets](#) (2021) to improve the pet rehoming sector.

This includes the implementation of a regulatory framework for Victoria’s pet rehoming sector to recognise Community Foster Care Networks (CFCNs), improve sector collaboration, enable government oversight and ensure consistency of care and equity in rehoming opportunities.

Taskforce recommendations

Recommendations from the Taskforce on Rehoming Pets that relate to introducing a regulatory framework for the sector, and to reporting requirements:

- Recommendation 7** Victorian Government to work with the sector to develop and implement a regulatory framework for the sector that considers and, where relevant, reviews existing regulatory instruments.
- Recommendation 8** Victorian Government to amend the Domestic Animals Act to introduce a registration scheme for the sector, similar to other registration schemes for existing domestic animal care and management organisations.
- Recommendation 9** Victorian Government to develop and introduce minimum standards for the care and management of animals by the sector (i.e. animals in temporary care).
- Recommendation 10** Victorian Government to fund the development, implementation and sustainable operation of a regulatory framework for the sector and identify resources and/or agencies best placed to undertake necessary administrative and compliance functions, noting a self-regulatory model is not suitable for the sector at this time.
- Recommendation 11** Victorian Government to require regulated rehoming groups (once a regulatory scheme is introduced) to collect and report animal fate data – aligning reporting requirements with the proposed amendments to shelter and pound reporting under the Code.

Engagement methodology

Throughout June and July 2024, Animal Welfare Victoria (AWV) engaged critical stakeholders across the pet rehoming sector on the development of a regulatory framework. This included CFCNs, foster carers, shelters, pounds, local governments and animal welfare organisations. Engagement included:

- 3 online expert engagement sessions with critical stakeholders
- An online survey distributed to Victoria’s 79 local governments
- An online survey for pet rehoming sector representatives.

Stakeholders were invited to contribute their feedback to several early policy proposals for the development of a regulatory framework for Victoria’s CFCNs.

Summary of findings

Stakeholders agreed that introducing a level of regulation of CFCNs could help recognise the sector and improve the consistency of operations across different organisations in Victoria.

It was considered that requiring CFCNs to register with the state government could help improve sector operations and recognise the important community service that CFCNs and foster carers provide.

CFCNs highlighted that it is important that any regulatory framework should consider the voluntary nature of the sector, with a focus on simplicity and minimal administrative burden and cost. Concerns were raised about how requirements for the regulatory framework would operate in practice, and how they would be enforced.

Theme 1: Simple requirements for registered CFCNs

Views were sought about what requirements could be established for registered CFCNs, such as conditions for registration, record keeping and reporting. Some feedback suggested that recording keeping and reporting requirements were essential for CFCNs for transparency of animal movements and outcomes across the pet rehoming sector. However, concerns were raised about the administrative burden that recording keeping and reporting requirements would impose on volunteer groups. Most CFCNs agreed they already kept basic record of animals in their care and the outcomes for these animals, which could be provided to the government. It was noted that some smaller organisations still use paper-based records and that any online reporting requirements should be simple and user-friendly.

Other feedback and ideas shared included:

- The period of registration for CFCN should be 2 to 3 years to reflect the high-turnover in the sector and ensure that groups are consistently meeting standards.
- Any fee for registration as a CFCN should be reasonable and recognise the not-for-profit nature of the sector. Some stakeholders felt CFCNs should not need to pay a registration fee.
- An appropriate online platform to facilitate reporting requirements was discussed. Some participants highlighted the Victorian Government's Pet Exchange Register (PER) portal as an example of an easy-to-use online system.
- Many thought that detailed records and reporting of foster animals should be kept, including the date an animal was taken into care, its breed, age, name, microchip, desexing and vaccination details. Others suggested more basic records should be kept and reported.

Theme 2: Benefits of registering CFCNs

Local government, pound and shelter stakeholders thought that CFCNs needing to register their organisation and meet specific standards would generate multiple benefits. Some suggested it would promote accountability, structure and consistency. Others thought that registration may increase collaboration between different pet rehoming groups and enable improved understanding and assurance about the standards and practices of CFCNs in Victoria. Pound and shelter stakeholders agreed that having a list of registered groups that meet minimum requirements would support working relationships and the transfer of animals between organisations for permanent rehoming.

Some CFCN stakeholders felt it was not clear how registering their organisation would support their work and the ongoing care and rehabilitation of animals. They highlighted that any registration scheme needs to have clear benefits or incentives for registered groups. Ideas suggested included:

- Funding or grant programs to support rehoming activities
- Access to existing databases to manage animal rehoming (microchip registries)
- Exemptions from specific fees (such as PER source number fees)
- Promotion of rehoming organisations that meet high standards under the registration scheme
- Recognition of a registered CFCN organisation as the owner of the animal rather than an individual foster carer.

Theme 3: Foster animals and local government registration

Stakeholders agreed it would be appropriate to provide relief from cat and dog registration fees for animals in foster care under the management of a registered CFCN. However, there were mixed views amongst stakeholders about what this registration relief should look like in practice. Local government stakeholders felt a reduced registration fee would be appropriate, or a registration exemption for a period of 3 to 6 months. Some CFCN stakeholders suggested a 12-month registration exemption was preferred, whereas others argued a longer registration exemption was required, or an option to extend the exemption, particularly for complex rehoming cases.

Other feedback and ideas were shared including:

- CFCN stakeholders agreed that the current Foster Carer Registration Scheme (FCRS) was not effective and should be removed.
- Some local government stakeholders also supported the removal of the FCRS, whereas others felt the scheme should be retained and improved.
- Many stakeholders agreed that local governments should still be notified about the location of foster animals even if the animal is not registered. However, there were concerns about how this would function in practice.
- The necessity of online systems to support information sharing of animal movements and reduce administrative burden for CFCNs was also raised.

Next steps

Results from this engagement are being considered and are informing the progression of work to develop a regulatory framework for Victoria's rehoming sector. Engagement with critical stakeholders will continue and there will be future opportunities to provide feedback.

More information

More information about the work to improve Victoria's pet rehoming sector is available at [animalwelfare.vic.gov.au](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/domestic-animal-businesses/shelters-and-pounds/pet-rehoming-sector-reforms) <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/domestic-animal-businesses/shelters-and-pounds/pet-rehoming-sector-reforms>

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