

**Tuesday 27 September**

## **Tighter restrictions for owners of dangerous dogs**

Changes to Victorian Legislation now mean that people could serve up to 10 years in jail, if their dog kills another person, the same penalties as dangerous driving causing death.

Indigo Shire Mayor Cr Ali Pockley said that these new State laws have been put in place to protect the Community. "The changes mean that people are only allowed to keep restricted breeds of dogs if they have been in Victoria from before 1 September 2010 and registered with their local Council before 30 September 2011. Owners of restricted breed dogs need to contact their local Council before 30 September to register it otherwise the new legislation requires that it be down," Cr Pockley said.

From this date, The Victorian Government will put a number of conditions in place for owners of dangerous and restricted breed dogs to adequately manage their animals including confining them in an escape-proof area with warning signs identifying the presence of a dangerous dog. The dog must be micro chipped, wear special identification and coloured collars and be on a leash and muzzled at all times when it is outside the owner's property.

In addition, it will be illegal for people to sell restricted breed dogs and owners of dangerous or restricted breed dogs who fail to tell their local Council when their dog escapes or when they change address will now face a fine of \$2442. The same penalty applies for owners who fail to restrain a dangerous or restricted breed dog on their property or \$4,885 for dogs outside their property.

There are five breeds of dogs prohibited from being imported into Australia. These are American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier), Fila Brasileiro, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Perro de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario).

"At this stage, Council has had about 12 phone calls from residents enquiring whether certain dogs might have large amounts of pit bull terrier blood in them. In every instance, our Rangers have inspected the dogs found them not to be Pit Bulls. We have nine Pit Bull Terriers registered in the Shire, and each owner has been visited to ensure that they are aware of the restrictions and regulations so there can be no confusion when the changes take place," Cr Pockley said.

"The difference between restricted and dangerous dogs is the restricted breeds are considered a higher risk to community safety than other breeds of dogs, and does not mean that the dog has displayed signs of aggression in the past. A dog is declared dangerous if it has menaced people more than once, has been trained to attack a person or has attacked or seriously injured a person or another animal, and is irrelevant of the breed of the dog," Cr Pockley said.

A dog that is used as a guard dog for somewhere other than a person's house is also considered a dangerous dog.

"All restricted dog breeds must be desexed before they can be registered, so what the State Government is doing is ensuring that these dog breeds will eventually entirely die out in Victoria in the future," Cr Pockley said.

“This new legislation highlights the responsibilities that pet owners have, not just to the community, but also to their animals,” Cr Pockley said.

“If people are looking at getting new dogs, they need to understand the needs of that type of dog, what conditions they need to be kept under and their own circumstances to ensure that that breed is right for them,” Cr Pockley said.

“For example, don’t expect working dogs such as Kelpies, Border Collies and Heelers to exist on ten minutes exercise a day and limited human company. These sorts of dogs, in particular, require a great deal of exercise and mental stimulation to stop them becoming bored and displaying behavioural problems when kept in urban situations. But, all dogs need sufficient exercise and human company to ensure that they and their owners and the neighbours are happy,” Cr Pockley said.

People can report a dog they believe is a restricted breed by phoning the dangerous dog hotline on 1300 101 080 between the hours of 8am and 6pm seven days a week.

For more information on restricted breed dogs, visit the Department of Primary Industries website [www.new.dpi.vic.gov.au/pets/dog-care](http://www.new.dpi.vic.gov.au/pets/dog-care) or call indigo Shire Council on 1300 365 003 or 02 6028 1100.

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