

Rehoming Pets Working Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose and objectives

The Rehoming Pets Working Group will collaborate with Animal Welfare Victoria to design, develop and test policy proposals to support the development and implementation of reforms for Victoria's pet rehoming sector. The reforms are in accordance with the [Taskforce on Rehoming Pets](#)' recommendations.

The working group will be an open forum for discussion, interpretation and development of reform ideas related to the cat and dog rehoming pathway: from an animal's admission into a rehoming organisation, its welfare and management while in care, and finally, adoption.

The working group will consider feedback provided by the pet rehoming and research and teaching sectors, in addition to local government and sector experts, during consultation. It will explore and assess practical policy, regulatory and/or legislative reform options. There will be the option to form sub-committees to explore specific reform ideas if needed.

The aims of the working group are to:

- facilitate communication amongst sector representatives regarding the regulation of Victoria's pet rehoming sector;
- support policy development by providing sector insights and expertise related to reform options;
- provide a central forum to guide effective design, development and communication of reform outcomes;
- exchange ideas, identify opportunities for improvement, strengthen sector engagement and skills, and share examples of best practice;
- ensure policy options are developed with consideration of the wider pet rehoming, research and teaching sectors' needs;
- test policy options for practicality, consider implications for the sector and identify solutions or options to overcome obstacles; and
- endorse policy options for recommendation to the broader pet rehoming, research and teaching sectors.

Term

The Terms of Reference are effective from 04 September 2023 and will remain in place for the duration of the working group, as deemed necessary by Animal Welfare Victoria.

Membership

The working group will have up to 20 members, who represent various aspects of the pet rehoming pathway. Membership will be determined via a nomination process and completion of a nomination form. Members can either self-nominate, or be nominated by their sector peers.

Animal Welfare Victoria will seek membership that is representative of the broader sector, including representatives from:

- rescue groups and foster carers;
- council pounds;
- animal shelters;
- local government;
- research organisations; and
- teaching organisations.

Following receipt of nominations, the Director of Pets and Animal Welfare will select nominee/s from each of the above groups based on the selection criteria.

Members may resign at any time by notifying the Director, Pets and Animal Welfare; vacancies will be filled via invitation from the Director of Pets and Animal Welfare.

Roles and Responsibilities

Members of the working group will commit to:

- attending all scheduled meetings, or nominating a proxy authorised to act on your behalf and able to contribute to policy development.
- championing the working group's purpose and objectives through active and productive contribution and communication.
- assisting with policy development on behalf of the sector and similar services.
- sharing communications and information, where required and directed, across your organisations and networks.
- engaging with organisations and networks to bring their feedback and ideas to working group meeting discussions.
- providing timely advice and ensuring deadlines are met, or negotiated where required, to meet project milestones.
- notifying members of the group if a conflict of interest arises.
- maintaining confidentiality where required.

Secretariat

Animal Welfare Victoria will provide Secretariat support to the working group and will ensure that:

- each working group member is provided with complete, accurate and meaningful information in a timely manner, including meeting papers, agendas, and minutes.
- each working group member is given reasonable time to provide considered advice on policy options and ideas.
- the working group promotes respectful, open and honest discussion.

Chair

Animal Welfare Victoria will appoint a representative to chair the working group. Key responsibilities of the Chair will include:

- approving the agenda and any papers to be circulated prior to each meeting.
- scheduling meetings and ensuring all meetings are held to agenda.
- directing working group discussions to remain in scope and on time as per the meeting agenda.

Meetings

Meetings will be held quarterly for up to three hours, or more often where required, via Microsoft Teams. A minimum of 50 percent member attendance is required to constitute a quorum.

Following prior approval from the Director of Pets and Animal Welfare, non-members may be invited to join meetings only where required to aid the discussion of a topic, as speakers, observers or invited guests.

Agendas and papers will be circulated by email, at least five working days in advance of meetings.

Remuneration

The Rehoming Pets Working Group is voluntary; members will not be remunerated for their participation in meetings or time spent reviewing meeting documentation.

If the working group decides an in-person meeting is required, personal expenses associated with attending an in-person meeting (such as travel) can be covered by the department.

Confidentiality

Correspondence between Animal Welfare Victoria and the group, including papers circulated to the group for consideration, shall be deemed confidential unless otherwise stated by Animal Welfare Victoria.

Circulation of documents:

- If the group wishes to circulate information, the group must seek and obtain approval from the Secretariat.
- Members will be able to share information and resources with each other at meetings and via email.
- It is each member's responsibility to make it clear where information they have shared is to remain confidential, and not for discussion outside the group.
- When sharing documents, members must make it clear if there is a restriction as to:
 - Circulation of the documents beyond the group
 - Copyright / use of the contents.

Working group sub-committees

The working group will have the option to form sub-committees that will be overseen by Animal Welfare Victoria. A sub-committee may be formed where:

- a group of working group members identify a specific issue or topic they would like to explore in more detail (e.g., microchipping).
- working group members belonging to the same pet rehoming area (e.g., animal shelters) or research and teaching organisations would like to explore an issue or topic that affects their operations.

Where working group members would like to form a sub-committee, they must:

- notify the working group Chair and Animal Welfare Victoria Secretariat via email;
- provide names of the sub-committee members; and
- provide an overview of the topic or issue the sub-committee would like to discuss.

The secretariat will work with the sub-committee members to facilitate meeting times, dates and other required materials. Any sub-committee formed will report its key findings and areas of discussion back to the broader Rehoming Pets Working Group.