



**Don Page MP**  
Minister for Local Government  
Minister for North Coast

**Katrina Hodgkinson MP**  
Minister for Primary Industries  
Minister for Small Business

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Wednesday 16 October 2013

### **NEW MENACING DOGS LAWS TO PROTECT COMMUNITY**

Local Government Minister Don Page and Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson today announced amendments to the Companion Animals Act would be introduced to create a new category of “menacing dog” to help safeguard the community.

Mr Page and Ms Hodgkinson set up the Companion Animals and Dangerous Dogs Taskforce to examine regulatory options available to reduce the number of serious dog attacks.

In addition to creating a new category of ‘menacing or potentially dangerous dog’ the legislation includes harsher penalties including prison terms for irresponsible owners and encourages owners to de-sex their animals.

“This new menacing dog category will allow councils to be more proactive in dealing with aggressive or menacing dogs that have not yet attacked or been classified as a dangerous dog,” Mr Page said

Ms Hodgkinson said: “These new provisions ensure that the penalties and restrictions work to encourage pet owners to meet the community’s expectation.”

Up until now, councils have only been able to classify a dog as ‘dangerous’ when it has already attacked, repeatedly threatened people or animals, or is used for hunting.

A dog defined as menacing will have to be muzzled and under the control of an adult when in public.

Mr Page said: “It was clear that the system we inherited from the former Labor Government did not adequately allow effective prevention of dog attacks nor did it support councils in their enforcement activities.”

The Taskforce, chaired by practising vet Andrew Cornwell MP, provided two reports to the Government with 38 recommendations. The reports were released for public consultation, with over 5300 submissions received.

“Under the new rules there will be increased penalty notice amounts and court penalties for failure to register a companion animal and where a dog has been involved in an attack,” Mr Page said.

“Failure to register a companion animal, (no matter where it is kept) will increase from \$165 to \$275.

“And if the matter goes to court, a fine up to \$6600 can be imposed,” Mr Page said.

“Our message is clear – if you own an animal, you need to be a responsible owner and take the proper precautions appropriate for the animal,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“Further to the increased penalties, the NSW Government will expand the existing pet education program to pre-school children and families expecting a child to raise awareness on how to act and be safe around dogs, and importantly prevent attacks.”

### **Fines and court penalty changes:**

- Up to \$44,000 – owning or being over 16 years old and being in charge of a dog that attacks a person or animal
- Up to \$55,000 and four years’ imprisonment – owning or being over 16 years old and being in charge of a dog that attacks a person or animal, if the incident occurs as a result of a reckless act or omission
- Up to \$77,000 and five years’ imprisonment – owning a classified dog that attacks a person and the incident is the result of the owners failure to comply with controls on the classified dog
- Up to \$77,000 and five years’ imprisonment – for a person who urges a dog to attack a person or animal.