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**TO:** General Manager Customer and Regulatory  
Manager Compliance Solutions

**FROM:** Team Leader Animals Services

**DATE:** 26 April 2022

**SUBJECT:** **PROPOSAL TO MOVE TO LIFELONG METAL DOG REGISTRATION TAGS  
(FROM ANNUAL PLASTIC TAGS)**

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## SUMMARY

1. This memo seeks approval for a proposal to change from issuing annual plastic dog registration tags to issuing lifelong metal tags. Benefits include:
  - Long-term cost savings
  - Reduction in administrative costs and
  - Significant reduction in plastic waste.
2. While this would require additional funding of approximately \$40,000 for the first year, there would be significant long term savings.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

3. It is recommended that:
  - a. The General Manager Customer & Regulatory notes and approves this change
  - b. The change commences from June 2023 to coincide with the next dog registration year
  - c. An extensive communications plan is carried out to advise the community of the change.

## BACKGROUND

4. The Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) requires that a dog registration disc or label is issued to each dog owner on payment of an annual dog registration fee. See Attachment A for the relevant section of the Act.
5. In Dunedin, there are approximately 19,000 known dogs on the Dunedin City Council (DCC) dog control register. This number increases at a rate of about 2,000 each year. Currently all registered dogs are issued with a plastic disc or plastic label, depending on the owner's preference. The colour of the tag changes every year. Tags are distributed annually via Council Service Centres or are posted out following online registrations.
6. In accordance with the Act, new registration tag numbers, along with associated information for renewal and new dogs, must be uploaded into the National Dog Database (NDD) annually. This database is administered by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA).
7. This process is resource intensive and involves multiple Council teams including the Customer Services Agency, Finance and some Service Centres. For example:
  - At least two mailouts are required each year to send registration invoices, reminders as required, and then post new dog tags after payment.

- It takes approximately 75 hours of administrative time to prepare envelopes for one mailout, with postage costs of around \$1,400.
  - Sometimes customers experience delays having their new tags issued due to this complex system.
8. The amount of waste from unused tags and expired tags is significant. The discs are not biodegradable so must be disposed of via landfill. It is estimated that more than 20,000 plastic dog tags and dog strips are disposed of in landfill each year. Most of these are tags that are past their annual 'use-by' date and discarded by dog owners. The DCC also discards some surplus tags that are no longer needed after the year end.

## PROPOSAL

9. The proposal is to issue dog owners with a metal registration tag from 1 July 2023. This tag will remain with the dog for its lifetime.
10. The registration number on the metal tags will be linked to the National Dog Database as the unique identification number associated with each dog and linked to our internal Pathway system<sup>1</sup>.
11. Each year, in accordance with the Act, information on the tag will be updated to show whether registration has been paid. Officers will be able to check the registration status.

## COST

12. The current cost of providing plastic dog registration tags annually is approximately \$8,000 per year.
13. The initial set up cost of providing lifelong metal tags would be approximately \$49,000 for the first year (depending on supplier). This is based on \$2.50 per tag for 19,500 dogs.
14. Thereafter, ongoing annual costs for new dogs are estimated at \$5,000 per year (approximately 2,000 new dogs are added each year). While an additional outlay of around \$41,000 is required, the initiative will provide long-term savings.
15. The following table summarises both current costs and proposed costs.

*Table 1: Summary of current and estimated proposed dog tag costs by year*

Year	Cost - Current (annual plastic tags)	Cost - Proposed (lifelong metal tags)
2023/24	\$8,000	\$49,000
2024/25	\$8,000	\$5,000
2025/26	\$8,000	\$5,000
2026/27	\$8,000	\$5,000
2027/28..	\$8,000	\$5,000

16. Postage costs would also be cut after the first year as the annual mailout of dog tags would no longer be required. Postage savings are estimated to be around \$1,200 per annum.
17. The additional cost required in the first year will be met within existing budgets.

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<sup>1</sup> If the dog was to move to a different council district, the new council would issue the appropriate disc, as per their standard practice.

## Advantages

- Reduction in plastic waste at landfill
- More convenient for dog owners by speeding up registration process
- Reduction in administrative resource
- Reduction in cost of annual tags (long-term) and postage
- Long term savings of approximately \$3,000 per annum (after the first year)
- More sustainable for the environment.

## Disadvantages

- Initial set up costs for the new tags and the promotion campaign
- Officers will no longer be able to make a quick visual assessment of dog's registration via tag colour.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

18. The DIA administers the Act and ensures compliance with its legislative requirements. Christchurch City Council is moving to a one tag solution for the 2022/23 year and was advised by the DIA in 2021 that:

*"The Department does not have a role in enforcing how local authorities implement legislative obligations that have an element of discretion. The Council should not expect to be challenged directly by us on this matter."*

19. Two other councils (Selwyn District and Hutt City) have successfully implemented lifelong tags and the DIA has been supportive of both. Central Otago District, Gisborne and Christchurch City councils are also moving to a one tag solution for the next registration year.

20. In-House Legal Counsel advise that the proposal poses little risk to the organisation. Fundamentally, when managed correctly, the DCC will be conforming to the principles of the Act. The Council's Dog Control Bylaw which covers a range of dog-related conditions, would not be affected by the proposed change.

21. Extensive communications are proposed to implement this change. This would include social media, news media, web pages, FYI and notices to dog owners.

## NEXT STEPS

22. If approved, management will work towards implementing this change, including working with Communications and Marketing, Customer Services, Finance, BIS and the administration staff.



Peter Hanlin  
TEAM LEADER ANIMAL SERVICES



Claire Austin  
General Manager  
Customer and Regulatory

## ATTACHMENT A

### *Dog Control Act 1996, Section 46, Issue of label or disc and completion of registration*

- (1) On receipt of the properly completed application form and the applicable dog control fee, the territorial authority shall, unless the registration of that dog in the ownership of that person would be in breach of [section 23](#) or [section 28](#), issue to the owner of the dog a receipt for the fee paid and a label or disc for the registration year, and, upon the issue of such label or disc, registration shall be deemed to have been duly made.*
- (2) The owner of the dog shall ensure that the label or disc issued by the territorial authority is attached to a collar worn on the neck of the dog so registered.*
- (3) If the authority is satisfied that a current label or disc for any dog has been lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed, it shall, on receipt of the appropriate fee, issue a replacement label or disc.*
- (4) Every person commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$3,000 who procures or attempts to procure a replacement label or disc for any dog knowing that a current label or disc for that dog has not been lost or stolen.*