

Dog owners

Anyone can talk to a lawyer for free at Tasmania Legal Aid.

To get free legal information call 1300 366 611, drop into our Hobart or Launceston office (no appointment necessary) or use the Legal Talk chat function on our website. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

A lawyer can listen to your story and help identify the next steps you can take.

All dog owners need to register their pet with their local council if the dog is over 6 months of age.

Do I need to register my pet dog?

All dog owners need to register their pet with their local council if the dog is over 6 months of age. Talk to your council about the registration fee and whether you may receive a discount. Generally, the registration fee is smaller if your dog is de-sexed or if you are a pensioner. Dogs need to be registered in the name of an adult. Once you register your dog you will receive a tag which should be placed on the dog's collar. Registrations must be renewed each year.

Registered dogs also need to be microchipped. This is a safe and painless procedure which will help find your pet should you lose them.

All dogs must wear a collar with their registration disc attached unless they are being used to drive stock or for racing or are being showed. If you keep more than 2 dogs, or 4 working dogs on your property, you must apply for a kennel licence. You may be fined if you do not register and microchip your dog or ensure that your dog is wearing a collar and registration disc when out in public.

When my dog is in public, what do I need to know?

The owner or person in charge of a dog must make sure the dog is effectively under their control while in public. A collar and lead should be used. In some circumstances it is possible to have your dog effectively under your control while they are off their lead. You must not take your dog into shops, shopping centres, school grounds, crèches, kindergartens, or sports grounds where sport is being played. A dog riding in, or on, a motor vehicle must be restricted enough so it cannot leave the vehicle to attack any person or other animal outside the vehicle.

What if my dog is found wandering around?

An authorised person may seize and detain any dog that is at large. If your dog is seized and is registered, then the council will let you know. You need to collect your dog within 5 working days and pay any fees or charges relating to its seizure. If you don't do this the dog becomes the property of the council and it may be sold or destroyed. If your dog is unregistered, then you must also pay for registration before the council will release it back to you.

What if my dog barks or poops in the street?

You need to make sure that your dog is not a nuisance to other people. Dogs that behave in a manner which could injure or be dangerous to the health of any person, or that create a persistent noise, are said to create a nuisance. Persistent barking is the basis of many complaints about dogs. Complaints should be made to the local council. The council will investigate the complaint and may issue a fine to the registered owner of the dog. If you do not pay the fine before it is due the council can take you to court.

Make sure you collect and dispose of your dog's droppings if you are in a public place. This does not apply to a guide dog going with a blind

person.

What if my dog causes damage?

If your dog causes damage to someone else, their clothing or other property, then you may need to pay for the damage. You should speak with a lawyer if someone accuses your dog of causing damage.

What if my dog attacks someone or something?

An owner of a dog must ensure that it does not attack a person or animal. If your dog attacks or chases people or other animals you may be charged with an offence under the [Dog Control Act 2000](#) and your dog may be seized, even if no actual injury is caused. If your dog has attacked a person, you must notify your local council within 24 hours of the attack.

What is a 'dangerous dog'?

The council has the power to declare a dog to be dangerous if that dog has caused, or is likely to cause, serious injury to a person or another animal. Dogs that have been declared dangerous must be de-sexed and implanted with a special microchip which is used to keep track of them. All dangerous dogs must wear a special collar and cannot have their microchip removed without the council's approval. All dangerous dogs must be muzzled in public and have a sufficient lead and be under the control of a person over 18 years of age. Owners of dangerous dogs must make sure they have placed approved warning signs on every entrance to the premises where the dog is kept. All guard dogs are declared dangerous dogs.

Can someone put my dog down?

Your dog may be lawfully destroyed by an authorised person or vet if it:

- is likely to cause serious injury to any person
- is likely to cause death or serious bodily injury to any animal
- has caused injury to a person
- has caused death or serious bodily injury to an animal, or
- is found distressed or seriously disabled.

An authorised person may even enter your home to destroy a dog. The law ensures that any dog that needs to be destroyed is done so quickly and without unnecessary suffering.

This is written for people who live in or who are affected by the laws of Tasmania, Australia. The law changes all the time – this information is not legal advice. If you have a legal problem, you should talk to a lawyer before making a decision about what to do.