PET AND ANIMAL POLICY

'How many are your works, O LORD!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.' (Psa. 104:24 NIV)

Everyone is welcome at Lightning Ridge Community Church (LRCC), including pet and animal lovers!

In the Anglican Diocese of Armidale, authority has been given to ministers, church wardens and regional archdeacons to have discretion over how parish property may be used (Schedule F, 'Anglican Diocese of Armidale Property Use Policy', *Parish Governance and Administration Ordinance 2015*).

To ensure that we can all enjoy our services and spaces in a happy and healthy way, please refer to the following policy guidelines adopted by Parish Council:

General groups and gatherings in main church building:

1. Approved ASSISTANCE ANIMALS[1] and EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS (ESA'S)[2] are permitted in all groups & gatherings, including our main Sunday services.

2. Other pets and animals may be brought along to our various groups and gatherings at the discretion of the Wardens and/or ministry staff, noting:
    a. Pets must be kept 'on leash' (or otherwise properly restrained) at all times, indoors and outdoors, while on the church property;
    b. For our Sunday services, a 'Pooch Porch' has been set up on the western veranda, with access to water bowl, bedding, and convenient points to safely secure your dog or other pet;

[1] An ASSISTANCE ANIMAL is a guide dog (also known as a SERVICE DOG) or other animal trained and approved to help a person with a disability (Section 9, Disability Discrimination Act 1992).
[2] EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS (ESA's) are pets that provide companionship and comfort to those experiencing common conditions such as depression, anxiety, phobias, and PTSD – ESA's require a letter from a registered mental health therapist or medical health professional stating that the pet is part of a therapy treatment plan.

c. If you have a reason to bring your pet inside, please first seek permission (ideally in advance) from one of the Wardens or ministry staff;
d. Care must be taken to ensure that your pet does not impede, frighten or harm any of our members or guests, with special care taken around children, the elderly and other vulnerable people;
e. Any mess or damage caused by pets is to be reported to one of the Wardens or ministry staff ASAP, and cleaned up, repaired or reimbursed (if necessary) by the pet owner promptly and satisfactorily.

Food preparation & service areas (including church hall & kitchen)

Under Australian Food Standards, only certain animals are permitted by law in areas where food is prepared and served.[3] For example, according to the *Standards*, approved assistance animals are allowed in all eating and drinking areas, whereas other pets are permitted in outdoor eating spaces only. Consistent with these standards, and in keeping with our OH&S and insurance obligations, this means for the purposes of LRCC hall and kitchen areas:

3. Approved ASSISTANCE ANIMALS and EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS (see definitions on previous page) are permitted on leash **inside the hall** where food and drinks are served and consumed (all 'customer accessed areas'), but are not permitted **in the kitchen** where food is prepared

4. All other pets and animals are not permitted **inside the kitchen or hall**, but are permitted on leash **in the outside back courtyard** where food is served and consumed (i.e. 'outdoor dining areas')

For the purposes of best caring for our people, pets and property, failure to comply with these guidelines may result in you being asked to remove your pet from the premises.

It is our hope that these guidelines will help everyone to enjoy their time with us at LRCC, both those with pets and animals and those without.

Please direct any questions/feedback to one of our Wardens, or contact the Minister directly: 02 6829 0597 | communitychurch@lightningridge.com.au

Adopted by Parish Council May 2023 / Amended August 2023

[3] Standard 3.2.2 – *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*