

Amendment to subordinate local law - new minimum standards for keeping honey bees, pigeons, and birds (excluding poultry)

What has changed?

The amendments introduce minimum standards for keeping honeybees, pigeons, and birds (excluding poultry) on properties across the Gympie region.

These standards are designed to support responsible practices while protecting the safety and amenity of the wider community.

The law helps ensure the keeping of honeybees, pigeons and birds are managed appropriately, reducing impacts on neighbours and public spaces while allowing residents to enjoy the environmental, recreational and agricultural benefits.

Prior to the changes being endorsed, Council's local laws did not include specific requirements for how these animals should be kept.

What are the new minimum standards for keeping honey bees?

Queensland's biosecurity laws require beekeepers to register their hives and manage bee health.

Council local laws complement these requirements by addressing community amenity and safety matters, such as where hives are located and how they are managed. The aim is to support responsible beekeeping while minimising impacts on neighbours and public spaces.

Under this local law, a beehive must be positioned:

- At least 10 metres away from any home on a neighbouring property.
- Beehives must be located to the rear of any home or premises on the property where the bees are kept.

What are the new minimum standards for keeping pigeons?

There are no Queensland standards or regulations for the keeping of pigeons.

This means it is up to Councils to manage the risks and issues including responding to complaints.

Setting a standard for the keeping of pigeons enable Council to ensure the birds are housed and managed responsibly.

The requirements help protect neighbourhood amenity, public health and animal welfare by limiting nuisance issues such as noise, odour, droppings and vermin, while still allowing residents to keep pigeons on their property

Under this section of the amended local law:

- Pigeon enclosures must have deep litter or another suitable material covering the floor.
- Pigeon enclosures must be regularly cleaned and maintained so that no food scraps, faeces or feathers may create a food source to attract rodents or other pests.
- Pigeon food must be stored in sealed vermin proof containers.
- Pigeon owners must manage any feral pigeons attracted to the pigeons they keep.
- The uncontrolled release of pigeons in a residential area is not permitted.
- Free non-flight time must be conducted under close supervision by the owner.
- The exit and entry of pigeons from a loft, aviary or cage must be fully controlled.
- Provision must be made for all released birds to return through a one-way entrance that will not permit uncontrolled exit.
- Every reasonable attempt must be made to retrieve pigeons that do not return to the owner's property.
- Pigeons must not roost on neighbouring properties.

What are the new minimum standards for keeping birds (excluding poultry)?

Each bird must be easily identifiable as belonging to its owner, such as through a leg band, ring or microchip.

Council may provide an exemption where:

- The bird has a medical condition, confirmed by a veterinarian.
- There are other reasonable circumstances, such as a bird being prepared for show purposes.

The amendments aim to:

- Better protect the welfare of the honey bees, pigeons and birds.
- Better protect public health, safety and amenity.
- Establish clear and consistent standards across the region.
- Provide Council with clearer enforcement tools to respond to issues and complaints.

Why did Council amend this subordinate local law?

Council receives complaints about birds, honey bees and pigeons being kept on properties, including concerns about noise, excessive droppings, odour, vermin attracted to the birds or

leftover food and waste, birds straying onto neighbouring properties including pools, rooves and outdoor living areas, and feelings of safety due to the location (proximity) of beehives and bee activity.

The changes are not intended to discourage residents from keeping birds, honey bees or pigeons. The minimum standards are designed to reduce these impacts by setting clear requirements for where and how they can be kept.

Establishing a legal framework will help owners understand their responsibilities and give Council the tools required to respond to community concerns and complaints and address issues.

Who will be affected?

Any person or business that keeps one or more:

- Honey bee hives.
- Pigeons.
- Birds (excluding poultry).

on their property.

Who will not be affected?

This local law amendment does not apply to the keeping of Native Bees.

How Council will apply the local law

The purpose of regulating the keeping of honey bees, pigeons and birds is to balance the interests of animal owners with the rights of neighbouring residents.

This local law has been introduced to help prevent nuisance impacts such as noise, odour, waste, vermin, safety concerns and other adverse effects on community amenity, while allowing responsible animal keeping to occur.

Council will apply the local law when responding to complaints from the community about the impacts of birds, honey bees or pigeons, about issues such as noise, smells, waste, pests, birds straying or bees affecting neighbouring properties.

Where a concern is raised, Council will work with the property owner to understand the issue and resolve it wherever possible. Compliance action will only be considered as a last resort.

Council will not undertake proactive inspection programs to identify properties where birds, honey bees or pigeons are being kept.

Council will provide information to help residents understand the new minimum standards, how they may be affected and what they need to do.