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# Residents call for RSPCA NSW to give Katoomba shelter back to the community

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By Jennie Curtin

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📷 Residents gather at the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba to respond to the RSPCA's announcement about the closure of its Katoomba shelter. Picture by Jennie Curtin

Residents concerned at the closure of the Katoomba RSPCA shelter have called on the state organisation to return it to the local community which built it.

More than 90 people gathered at the Carrington Hotel on August 8 to share their thoughts and hopes about the future of the shelter.

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RSPCA NSW CEO, Steve Coleman, announced in July that the shelter, which has 50 heated kennels and a separate cattery, would be shut.

A sign has already been posted at the gate, leaving a mobile number for people with stray animals. This is in keeping with the agreement the organisation has with Blue Mountains council to continue to act as a pound.

But as many speakers said at the meeting, the shelter was built by the Mountains community, partly through bequests from locals and partly through support of the two op shops the branch operated for many years.

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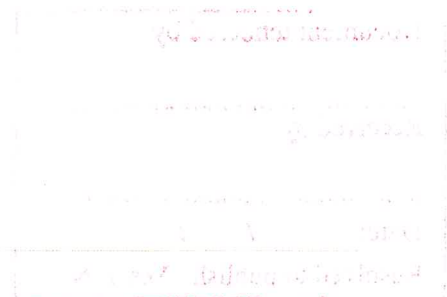


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📷 Bob Kemnitz at the microphone.

As one put it: "This community built this shelter - it's morally ours."

The meeting eventually called for the return of the shelter to the community.

A motion was passed which read: "The present shelter was bought by the Blue Mountains branch of RSPCA, and paid for by donations from residents of the Blue Mountains. Therefore, it should be given, or sold at a very reasonable price, to the Blue Mountains community.

"A model pound and shelter should then be established, with the pound staff being employed by Blue Mountains City Council, and the shelter managed by the community and staffed in part by volunteers."

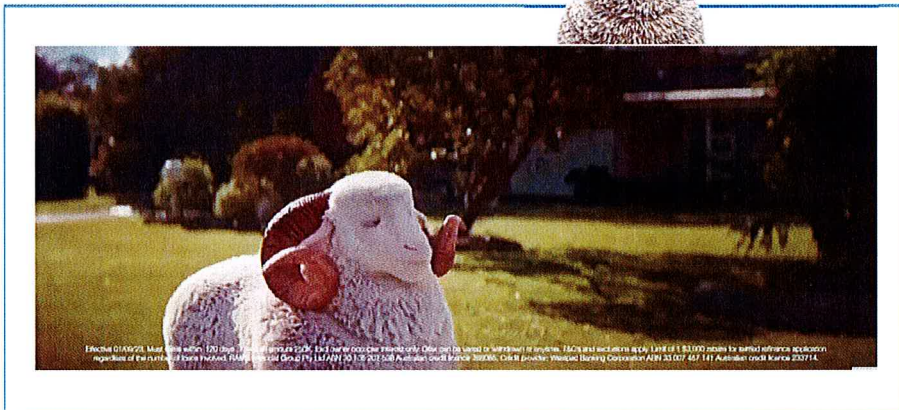
There was a sense of frustration at the meeting that the 50 kennels are sitting unused, even as RSPCA NSW sends out regular emails seeking donations to help save animals.



📷 Silvia Ford and Bob Kemnitz co-chaired the meeting.

People spoke angrily about what they claimed was RSPCA NSW's false advertising – television ads in which it presents itself as a shelter and rescue organisation, not a "commercial training and boarding facility", as described in their approved \$4.4 million DA for the site.

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Many also warned that dumping of unwanted animals in the bush would return, as happened in the years before the shelter was built.

Several said they had stopped donating to RSPCA NSW and had taken the organisation out of their wills.

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audited report of RSPCA NSW (2021-22) showed it had \$154 million  
in assets and had received \$34 million in bequests.

The *Gazette* has contacted RSPCA NSW for comment.

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