



13 December 2023

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Parliament of New South Wales  
6 Macquarie St.  
Sydney NSW 2000

Sent via email: [PortfolioCommittee8@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:PortfolioCommittee8@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**SUBJECT                      RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TO BLUE  
MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL – UPPER HOUSE  
COMMITTEE - NSW IMPOUNDING ENQUIRY**

**Question 1. What strategies do you believe would be most effective in reducing euthanasia in pounds, and how can the State Government help to reduce unnecessary euthanasia?**

**BMCC Response:**

In addition to BMCC submission to this topic:

State government can increase financial and ongoing support for desexing programs to further reduce potential litters of pets, in particular cats, in addition to being mandatory for all rescue animals, cats & dogs to be desexed before rehoming. Support the establishment of community education & rehoming facilities at a more localised level, with a focus on owner welfare cases, such as, elderly admitted into care, individuals unable to care for pets, changing housing & accommodation arrangements or due to unforeseen circumstances, as currently the Blue Mountains LGA has no public animal welfare facilities, noting the nearest RSPCA shelters are located at Orange or Yagoona in Sydney.

**Question 2. What is the total value of all assets owned by Blue Mountains City council and its entities?**

**BMCC Response:**

\$1,460,842,000.

Council owns and maintains more than \$1.46 billion worth of infrastructure assets. Much of the City's infrastructure was built many decades ago, often with funding from other levels of government, and now requires significant renewal. These assets, used by residents and visitors every day, deteriorate over time and require ongoing maintenance or replacement. Economic and legislative conditions such as rate pegging and increasing costs for materials are significant challenges for all NSW councils, including Blue Mountains, and result in restrictions on our ability to meet our existing and emerging community priorities. This financial challenge is highlighted by Council's Building and Infrastructure Asset Renewal Ratio (benchmark of 100%), which has averaged 45% over the past 9 years.



The total value of BMCC assets directly related to animal management is estimated at < \$50k, which is made up of portable plant such as trailers for transport of animal s and basic holding yards at our Katoomba Works Depot for temporary holding of livestock which are not catered for at the Mort Street site or under the Deed of Agreement for Animal Management Services with RSPCA NSW.

**Question 3. What is the total value of all income Blue Mountains City Council received last financial year (F22/23)?**

**BMCC Response:**

\$179,973,000.

**Sustainable Asset Management - Why is this an issue for our city?**

Local government is responsible for the provision of a wide range of essential infrastructure and services. The geography of our city – spread out along a ridge line with some villages close to 45km from the nearest major centre – means that we need to duplicate assets to ensure our community has reasonable access to facilities and services. Consequently, we have a high ratio of infrastructure and assets per resident compared to other areas, with a relatively small rate base from which to levy contributions. In recent years, challenges with asset management have been exacerbated by climate change and more frequent extreme weather events, with four declared Natural Disasters since March 2021. Our high tourist visitation rate (4 million p.a.) puts additional strain on local infrastructure and assets.

**Question 4. What is the total value of all capital expenditures made by Blue Mountains City Council and its entities last financial year (F22/23)?**

**BMCC Response:**

\$31,784,000

Note: over 65% of the capital expenditure was funded by grants and contributions from other levels of government.

**Question 5: What is the total value of all operational expenditures by Blue Mountains City Council and its entities last financial year (F22/23)?**

**BMCC Response:**

\$161,401,000.

**Question 6: What is the total value of all expenditures made by Blue Mountains City Council and its entities last financial year (F22/23)?**

**BMCC Response:**

\$193,185,000.

**Question 7: What is Blue Mountains City Council's total investment in animal welfare in their LGA in the last ten years?**

**BMCC Response:**

Item	Annual Estimated Cost	Total Estimated 10 yr. Cost
Animal management	\$165,372	\$1,653,720

Plant/ labour / overheads	\$146,918	\$1,469,180
Pound Operation / Contract	\$96,737	\$967,371
Veterinary & Sustenance	\$10,000	\$100,000
CAWS Program		\$31,000
<b>Total Estimated 10 yr. Spend</b>		<b>\$4,221,271</b>

**Question 8: Aside from operating the Mort Street Animal Care Facility, has Blue Mountains City Council ever been the beneficiary of RSPCA NSW programs being delivered to the LGA?**

**If yes, how much in each of the last ten financial years?**

**BMCC Response:**

Council has partnered with RSPCA Blue Mountains Volunteer Branch and local vets to deliver CAWS program to the community. This program supports those under hardship to enable pets to be desexed and microchipped. For the past four years BMCC has contributed \$5k and the volunteer branch \$10k per annum. It is not clear if any of these funds originate with RSPCA NSW or solely funds supplied by the local branch based on their fund-raising activities.

Recently RSPCA NSW launched: "Keeping Cats Safe at Home" program and invited Council's to an EOI. BMCC was successful in their bid and were required to pay a once off \$10k contribution to commence in the program. The program will provide up to \$90k between 2022 and 2027. In 22/23 Council in partnership with researchers from RSPCA achieved:

- Undertook cat surveys and covered an area of 960km<sup>2</sup>! We determined that:
  - Cats in the Blue Mountains are most active between 9am and 6pm which suggests that most people are containing their cats at night. This was different to the results of other participating Councils which showed that cats are most active at night.
  - There are approx. 361.4119 cats in the 1604ha of residential land in the Blue Mountains
  - Our cat 'encounter rate' is 0.9375 cats per 1km.
- Deployed 50 camera traps on private property across the LGA which recorded lots of cats, a range of different animal species and over 150 foxes.
- Launched a 15% cat enclosure discount at CatNets.com.au for those who sign up to our project newsletter, the "Cat-ch up"
- Launched 3 social media campaigns with project messaging targeting multiple audience segments based on initial consultation findings. There was excellent community engagement on these posts.
- Launched a [centralised KCSAH website](#)
- Developed key resources for the community including the highly requested ['how to talk to your neighbour about their cat'](#) brochure

**Question 9: Has Blue Mountains City Council received any money from the NSW Government for their Animal Care Facility? If yes, how much in each of the last financial years?**

**BMCC Response:**

No not directly. We note however the following breakdown detailed in this year's BMCC Annual Report. Income from animal registration is collected and reported to NSW OLG. OLG subsequently issue Council an invoice for these fees and BMCC pays invoice. Following this process OLG refund a portion of this income to Council. There appears no set percentage or timing on when or how much is refunded to BMCC.

**Amount of funding spent relating to Companion Animal Management**

Council's net expenditure in relation to companion animal management and activities for 2022-2023 is estimated at \$347,411. Details are as follows:

Income	
Companion Animal Fund	-\$62,591
Pound income (sustenance and release fees, pound subsidy)	-\$3,840
Expenditure	
Enforcement by Rangers	\$295,000
Provision of pound facility	\$112,848
Veterinary costs	\$994
Education (public advertisements in news print), estimate	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>\$347,411</b>

**Question 10: Has Blue Mountains City Council ever contributed to the maintenance of the Mort Street Animal Care Facility? If yes, what amount in what financial year.**

**BMCC Response:**

Council has not contributed any funds for maintenance of the facility in addition to annual payment of animal management deed of agreement costs, as RSPCA NSW owns and is responsible for maintenance of the site and its assets. Council has requested a copy of the site's Asset Management Register from RSPCA NSW (as part of our due diligence enquiries into alternative options for impounding for the city) and has to date not received a reply to this request.

It is noted the following annual and ten-year total cost for BMCC is below, and clearly a portion of this cost would or should be used to contribute to the maintenance of the facility.

Pound Operation / Contract	\$96,737	\$967,371
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**Question 11: Has Blue Mountains City Council ever contributed to the operations of the Mort Street Animal Care facility? If yes, what amount and in what financial year?**

**BMCC Response:** The following annual and ten-year total cost for BMCC is below, and clearly a portion of this cost would or should be used to contribute to the operations of the facility.

Pound Operation / Contract	\$96,737	\$967,371
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**Question 12. Does Blue Mountains City Council charge RSPCA NSW for rates or any other charges? If so, how much since the facility opened?**

**BMCC Response:**

The property at 121-125 Mort Street, KATOOMBA NSW 2780 has been exempted from rating since prior to 2000. Council understands the exemption was made pursuant to section 556(h) of the Local Government Act 1993. This rating exemption will be reviewed as the use of the land may have recently changed and the land may no longer be eligible for exemption.

**Question 13. Has Blue Mountains City Council ever offered to reduce or discount the rates and other charges RSPCA NSW has paid while operating the Mort Street Animal Care Centre?**

**BMCC Response:**

There has been no need to offer a discount or to reduce the rates because the property has been exempted from rates. Council's Manager of Finance is not aware of any offer by Council.

**Question 14. How much money has Blue Mountains City Council paid in Emergency Services Levies the last five financial years, and how much are you expecting to be charged next financial year?**

**BMCC Response:**

**2018/2019**

Fire +  
Rescue 1,115,825.00

NSW RFS 919,399.00

NSW SES 146,783.04

**2,182,007.04**

**2019/2020**

Fire +  
Rescue 1,224,163.00

NSW RFS 1,156,329.00

NSW SES 122,849.36

**2,503,341.36**

**2020/2021**

Fire + Rescue	1,366,950.00
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NSW RFS	1,650,622.00
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NSW SES	153,233.00
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	<b>3,170,805.00</b>
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**2021/2022**

Fire + Rescue	1,205,165.00
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NSW RFS	1,266,882.00
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NSW SES	115,927.64
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	<b>2,587,974.64</b>
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**2022/2023**

Fire + Rescue	1,446,688.00
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NSW RFS	1,609,072.00
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NSW SES	212,095.80
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	<b>3,267,855.80</b>
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13,711,983.84	Previous 5 years
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**2023/2024**

Fire + Rescue	1,703,894.00
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NSW RFS	1,610,159.00
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NSW SES	364,891.36
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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,678,944.36</b>	next financial year
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**TOTALS**

Fire + Rescue	8,062,685.00
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NSW RFS	8,212,463.00
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NSW SES	1,115,780.20
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	<b>17,390,928.20</b>
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Yours faithfully

Craig Martin  
Manager Environmental Compliance

William Langevad  
Director Environment & Planning Services

## APPENDIX A

### Additional Information for Submission to Enquiry:

1. Representations from Cat Rescue organisation
2. Representations from local Blue Mountains Veterinary Service provider

1. Email received August 17, 2023 by BMCC Councillor

*Hi Romola, I run the Hazelbrook Cat Shelter in Nauti Studios. You visited one of our shelter's rooms in Nauti Studios last year if you remember. I'm wondering who I could talk to about seeking council funding for our shelter? For the last year since Katoomba RSPCA has been shutting down, I've been inundated with help requests for locals with everything from stray cats, abandoned cats, to cat cruelty reporting. I don't receive funding and we're a small group of 20 volunteers. It's devastating for us to turn those requests down because we don't have the capacity. With funding, I can easily open up 2 or 3 new cat rooms in Nauti Studios to support more cats, or afford their medical treatment and food that goes with it. I started as a sole rescuer but my charity is turning into a community group, but I don't know how to expand to meet the new needs of cats in the Blue Mountains. I've found Nauti Studios to be a great place to run it, being insulated, heated or air con when required, quiet, and easy access for my volunteers without needing a building built, most who are from NDIS, senior, or military veterans (these are the most frequent people looking for volunteer work).*

2. Email received November 2023 by BMCC Councillor

*Michelle Hayward Blackheath Veterinary Clinic  
Would like a call and to discuss the management of stray dogs.  
Small vet clinic with only 6 cages and no run and can't hold stray dogs. Not our responsibility. It is a council responsibility. Concerned that more dogs will come to her as RSPCA is closing very soon.  
She was claiming website says take dog to local vet (but now I checked it doesn't - she may require educating on the procedure - held aggressive/stray dog for nearly a week before notifying us today CSR498180 and was very frustrated) Feels there should be a meeting between local vets and council to work out a plan of what is happen as RSPCA is closing and some vet practices are larger than others and have the ability to hold animals where are they do not.*