

**INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NSW
RSPCA NSW - SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS**

DATE 13 December 2023

- 1. How has the RSPCA NSW used the NSW government funding allocated in March 2021 for “enhanced facilities to carry out its important work, particularly its invaluable pet adoption services, community assistance programs and animal rescue services”**
 - a. A dog playground and COVID-safe outdoor public waiting area at Sydney - Sydney (Yagoona) \$3.855 million – has this money being expended and the facility built? How is this money going to benefit the community with current COVID recommendations and safety measures?**
 - b. Veterinary hospital upgrades at Broken Hill \$1.775 million – has this money being expended and the upgrades completed? What were the upgrades for?**
 - c. Veterinary upgrades at the Hunter \$1.170 million - has this money being expended and the upgrades completed? What were the upgrades for?**
 - d. A new cattery at Illawarra \$420,000 - has this money being expended and the new cattery built? Given the contract with local councils Shoalhaven and Wollongong is not being continued, is this facility still a responsible use of money?**
 - e. Cattery upgrades at Coffs Harbour \$200,000 - has this money being expended and the upgrades completed?**
 - f. Cattery upgrades at Orange \$210,000 - has this money being expended and the upgrades completed?**
 - g. Bushfire emergency response centre at Sydney – Statewide project management and coordination \$685,000 - has this money being expended and the response centre completed?**
 - h. A purpose-built wildlife and companion animal facility at Katoomba \$1.340 million - has this money being expended and the upgrades completed? Given RSPCA’s decision to close the shelter in Katoomba, is this facility still required?**
 - i. Central Coast \$720,000 – what was this money intended for and has it been expended?**
 - j. Lithgow \$105,000 - what was this money intended for and has it been expended?**
 - k. Tweed Heads \$20,000 - what was this money intended for and has it been expended?**

Answer to supplementary question 1:

RSPCA NSW gratefully received vital funding from the NSW Government in 2021 to enhance and upgrade several of our animal shelters across the state. This support underscores our shared commitment to improving the welfare of animals in our care and providing them with a safe and comfortable environment.

The \$10,500,000 provided by the NSW Government contributes towards almost \$21,000,000 worth of capital projects. We are thankful to our members, donors, and supporters, whose contributions have made these projects possible in this 50:50 partnership with the NSW Government.

Our organisation is dedicated to acting in accordance with our primary animal welfare objectives and doing so in a transparent and accountable manner. In line with this commitment, the Committee can be assured that funds received are acquitted in compliance with the NSW Government standards and overseen carefully by the issuing authority, in this case, the Office of Local Government. We are fully committed to meeting and exceeding the standards set by their rigorous guidelines and funding agreements.

These enhancements to our shelters prioritise the well-being of the animals and exceed industry standards. This includes improvements to shelter facilities, veterinary care, and overall living conditions for the animals under our protection. We believe strongly in the importance of responsible stewardship of public funds and are confident that the allocated resources are being used efficiently and effectively.

We are pleased to provide the following updates regarding specific projects:

- a. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$3,986,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards a \$6,346,000 capital works program at our centre in Yagoona. This project delivers four new dog exercise parks increasing the amount of space available for dogs to exercise and play whilst in our care; outdoor waiting areas for customers; covered walkways between buildings and roofing of animal ambulance bays; complete renovation of the main feed room where hundreds of meals are prepared every day; new level roadways; landscaping to assist with temperature control of outdoor spaces and to provide scent and sight stimulation for the dogs in our care; stormwater and the decommissioning of an old sewer; state of the art veterinary equipment including new animal HVAC systems to improve the diagnostics and care ability we can deliver through our hospital; IT & AV equipment to enhance the connectivity we have with our sites around the state; new roller shutters to provide complete cover for the animals from extreme weather conditions; and new laundry machines to ensure we are as water efficient as possible at the same time as managing disease control with appropriate sanitisation standards. This figure also includes our new Emergency Rescue Centre, which is expanded upon in point “g” below.*
- b. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$1,867,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$2,762,000 worth of capital works at our Broken Hill Veterinary Hospital. We were pleased to welcome the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Ron Hoenig MP, to the site in August 2023 to take part in a ceremonial sod turn, marking the commencement of the project. Being one of only two veterinary clinics in the Broken Hill region, this investment will support the RSPCA NSW in providing increased, high-quality veterinary services for the pets and animals of the local Broken Hill community and the far west. The renovations involve the construction of an additional consulting room and surgery, new pre-op and post-op animal wards and animal isolation units, and new surgical preparation and animal treatment areas. It will also fund new*

veterinary equipment to increase our ability to provide high-quality medical support across a broad range of animal health issues. This facility is the only RSPCA veterinary clinic within a 300-kilometre radius, and we're very excited to see the already commenced upgrade works, which will deliver increased capacity and state-of-the-art services for the region.

- c. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$1,297,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$6,218,000 worth of capital works at our Hunter Veterinary Hospital and Hunter Shelter. This project delivers the construction of a complete upgrade to the existing Vet Hospital, including additional surgical space, upgraded and new equipment and extra pre- and post-op wards for animals readying or recovering from surgery; and shelter upgrades, including the addition of an Animal Disaster and Emergency Response Centre that will allow us to provide much needed large animal holding and evacuation space in times of disaster.*
- d. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$442,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$3,619,000 of capital works at our Illawarra Adoption Centre. This project delivers refurbished reception and adoption rooms to support the thousands of adoptions and customers that occur every year at this site; new access roads around the site providing better and more direct access to the entire site via a vehicle, erosion control, enhanced security systems and a third Emergency Rescue Centre. This network of Emergency Rescue Centers (Hunter, Sydney, Illawarra) enhances our ability to strategically store equipment in areas of most need and dispatch swiftly in an emergency.*
- e. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$210,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$590,000 of capital works at our Coffs Harbour Adoption Centre. This project delivered the construction of a new cattery, which has significantly improved the housing we can provide for felines in our care in northern NSW. Each enclosure is now larger, has free access to indoor/outdoor space, and ample natural light sources which has improved welfare outcomes for the cats in our care. We have also completed a full Hydraulics System Upgrade to improve efficient water usage on site.*
- f. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$210,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$245,000 of capital works at our Orange Adoption Centre. This project delivered a complete renovation of the existing cattery, increasing our capacity for cat rehoming in the Central West and the construction of additional Dog Exercise Yards and a new Animal Isolation Ward to optimise disease control within the site.*
- g. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$912,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$2,087,000 of capital works at our Sydney Centre. This project has delivered the construction of a new RSPCA NSW Rescue Centre and has been completed. The purpose-built Rescue Centre will serve as the key hub for our state-wide natural disaster response. Whether it be the black summer bushfires, record-breaking floods, the pandemic, or mouse plague, we've lived through a challenging and character-building chapter in our state's history these past few years. During each of these disasters, RSPCA NSW stood shoulder-to-shoulder with local communities, helping farmers and pet owners*

who had lost everything care for their companion animals and livestock. While we hope such disasters are never to be repeated, we're proud to have worked in partnership with the NSW Government and improved the residence of our state by investing in the Rescue Centre, which increases our emergency disaster response capacity and will provide a base for coordinating all mobile response units and house emergency response rescue vehicles & equipment.

- h. RSPCA NSW was provided \$10,500,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards capital works at our centres. Our organisation originally planned to use \$1,340,000 from this fund to establish a multi-million-dollar facility capable of managing companion animals and wildlife in the Blue Mountains. The plans were significantly modified after consultation with the community and key stakeholders. The financial impacts caused by modifying our initial plans, alongside dramatically escalating construction costs and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, made the redevelopment unviable. Alternate plans are being finalised for capital works using these funds in accordance with the NSW Government's funding agreement.*
- i. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$757,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$972,000 of capital works at our Central Coast Behavioral and Rehabilitation Centre. This project delivers the construction of significant site Improvements and a Puppy Taskforce Building.*
- j. RSPCA NSW has been provided \$105,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$145,000 of capital works at our Lithgow Horse Care and Rehabilitation Centre. This project delivers a horse agistment facility that will help us meet the ongoing and increasing demands of the Inspectorate and shelter with respect to horse seizures and surrenders.*
- k. RSPCA NSW has been provided with \$20,000 from the NSW Government to contribute towards \$20,000 of capital works at our Tweed Heads Op Shop. This project delivers necessary building upgrades for the Tweed Heads Op Shop.*

We are grateful for the support from the government and remain dedicated to our mission of promoting and protecting the welfare of animals. Our ongoing collaboration with the Department of Primary Industry and the Office of Local Government exemplifies our commitment to maintaining the highest animal care and shelter management standards. We look forward to keeping the public informed about the progress of these upgrades and the positive impact they will have on the lives of the animals in our care.

- 2. What compensation has been or is being provided to Local Councils that have contributed to the operation and maintenance of animal shelters where RSPCA has withdrawn from animal holding facility contracts with them?**

Answer to supplementary question 2:

We are not aware of any payments made by any local council as a contribution to the maintenance or overall operation of our charity's shelters. All contracts with councils that engaged RSPCA NSW to operate their local pound services were on a fee-for-service basis.

- 3. How many inspectors does RSPCA NSW hire? What are their required qualifications, and do all workers have these qualifications? If not, why?**
- 4. What training is provided to inspectors? What ongoing audits are conducted of their work to ensure they are able to fulfill the obligations of their role?**

Answer to supplementary questions 3 and 4:

In FY22/23, 38 FTE Inspectors were deployed across the state, and after a significant recruitment drive in Q1 FY23/24, we are proud to have expanded this to 59 FTE Inspectors, ensuring our team can respond safely in the company of another officer to the approximately 15 000 increasingly complex and dangerous cruelty complaints we receive each year.

RSPCA NSW takes great pride in its dedicated team of inspectors who play a crucial role in enforcing the state's animal welfare laws. Upon recruitment, our inspectors undergo rigorous training programs to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities effectively, including:

- *Certificate IV in Government Investigations: This qualification allows for the attainment of occupational specific competencies for those working in operational roles undertaking government investigation related functions, with a particular focus on meeting the ethical and legislative requirements of the public service. It is suitable for individuals who need to apply a broad range of specialised knowledge and skills in specific contexts within the investigations and regulatory compliance environment. The generalist qualification covers the broad range of skills required to operate without supervision in a government investigations environment where an individual is required to plan, initiate, conduct and finalise an investigation. The regulatory compliance specialisation covers the skills required by those responsible for ensuring statutory compliance with the requirements of legislation, regulations and organisational policy. Senior Inspectors and Team Leaders also gain this qualification at a Diploma Level.*
- *Animal Husbandry Training: RSPCA NSW places a strong emphasis on ensuring that our inspectors possess a thorough understanding of animal husbandry practices. This training encompasses both livestock and domestic animals, with the aim of enabling our inspectors to assess and address the diverse needs of various species. By fostering expertise in animal husbandry, we empower our inspectors to make informed decisions regarding the welfare of the animals under their care.*
- *Tactical Defense Training: Recognising the challenges and potential risks our inspectors may encounter in the field, RSPCA NSW provides comprehensive tactical defence training. This aspect of the program focuses on equipping inspectors with the skills necessary to handle situations that may pose a threat to their safety. Through*

practical scenarios and theoretical instruction, our inspectors learn to employ defensive tactics responsibly and effectively.

- *Verbal Tactics: Effective communication is paramount in the field of animal welfare, and our training program addresses this through verbal tactics training. Inspectors are taught to employ clear and assertive communication strategies to manage challenging situations, interact with animal owners, and educate the public about responsible animal care.*
- *Humane Euthanasia Training: As part of our commitment to the humane treatment of animals, RSPCA NSW ensures that inspectors are trained in humane euthanasia methods. This training is essential for situations where euthanasia is deemed necessary, ensuring that it is carried out with the utmost compassion and adherence to ethical standards.*
- *Legal Training: the RSPCA NSW Legal team provides regular and ongoing training of inspectors as to the operational and legal requirements for exercising our enforcement function under POCTAA. We engage senior and leading Barristers from the NSW Bar and provide written materials and practical training in relation to the collection of evidence, construction of briefs and giving evidence in Court.*

Additionally, each inspector's appointment requires the explicit approval of the Minister for Agriculture, emphasising the gravity and importance of their role in upholding animal welfare across the state. Our commitment to ongoing training reflects our dedication to staying abreast of evolving industry standards and best practices, ensuring that our inspectors remain at the forefront of animal welfare enforcement. RSPCA NSW is grateful for the ongoing support and collaboration with the government in our shared mission to safeguard the well-being of animals throughout the region.

5. Do inspectors cover designated geographical areas? What are these areas and how is this determined?

Answer to supplementary question 5:

RSPCA NSW's inspectors strategically operate in teams across the state and are assigned specific geographical areas based on demand to ensure comprehensive coverage of animal welfare concerns. While each inspector has designated areas of responsibility, our commitment to animal welfare goes beyond boundaries.

When urgent assistance is needed or an extra pair of hands can make a significant impact, our inspectors collaborate and support each other across nearby regions. This collaborative approach allows us to respond more effectively to the diverse needs of animals and their owners, ensuring that our resources are deployed efficiently and where they are most needed.

This cooperative effort reflects our shared dedication to promoting the welfare of animals throughout the entire state, demonstrating that our commitment extends beyond individual territories to create a more interconnected and responsive system of care and enforcement. RSPCA NSW is proud of the teamwork and flexibility exhibited by our inspectors, reinforcing our collective mission to protect and advocate for the well-being of animals across NSW.

- 6. How much did RSPCA NSW spend supporting councils last financial year with outreach programs, including but not limited to desexing days and healthy pet days?**

Answer to supplementary question 6:

Last financial year, RSPCA NSW dedicated \$30,347,000 towards programs that directly support councils across NSW.

These costs exclude central on-costs for HR, payroll, IT, finance, and property services, as well as costs associated with fundraising. It also doesn't account for the valuable contributions made by volunteers.

- 7. What was the total value of the Mort Street Animal Care Facility when it was donated to RSPCA NSW?**

Answer to supplementary question 7:

The Mort Street Animal Care Facility was left to RSPCA NSW in 1981, valued at \$35,000.

- 8. Since its opening, how much money has RSPCA NSW spent on the Mort Street Animal Care Facility operations?**
- 9. How much money has Blue Mountains City Council provided to support the RSPCA NSW in running the Mort Street Animal Care Facility since it opened?**

Answer to supplementary questions 8 and 9:

Over the last ten years, the Mort Street Animal Care Facility has cost more than \$7,280,000 to operate, and Blue Mountains City Council paid \$1,100,000 on a fee-for-service basis.

These costs exclude central on-costs for HR, payroll, IT, finance, and property services, as well as costs associated with fundraising. It also doesn't account for the valuable contributions made by volunteers.

- 10. Have other Councils in NSW successfully transitioned from relying on RSPCA NSW to operate and manage their pounds, and if so, how have they done this?**

Answer to supplementary question 10:

Yes, examples include:

City of Coffs Harbour Council successfully transitioned the provision of pound services, following the decision by RSPCA NSW not to renew their longstanding contract. This transition was a great example of a council taking a practical solutions-based approach to providing essential services to their community. This transition, marked by strategic decision-making and collaboration with local charities, including RSPCA NSW, reflects the Council's commitment to animal welfare and community engagement.

For many years, the RSPCA provided pound services for Coffs Harbour City Council, and when this contract was not renewed, the Council undertook the responsibility of providing pound services independently.

In a move to enhance and streamline the provision of pound services, Coffs Harbour City Council invested \$1.5 million in creating a purpose-built facility. This state-of-the-art facility, which opened in early 2022, is designed to meet and exceed the standards set for the welfare and care of animals in the pound. The facility is equipped with the necessary infrastructure, including dedicated spaces for dogs and cats, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for the animals in its care.

Recognising the importance of collaborative efforts in rehoming animals, Coffs Harbour City Council actively engages with local charities, including with RSPCA NSW. This collaborative approach ensures that animals not reclaimed from the pound are given the best chance of finding loving homes through the efforts of reputable charitable organisations.

The Council's commitment to the welfare of animals extends beyond the pound services, as evidenced by its collaborative efforts with local charities. By actively participating in rehoming initiatives, the Council contributes to building a more compassionate and responsible community, promoting the well-being of animals and fostering positive relationships with local organisations.

Orange City Council successfully transitioned from relying on the services of RSPCA NSW to establishing an in-house provision of pound services. Historically, Orange City Council had relied upon RSPCA NSW to provide pound services on its behalf. However, when RSPCA NSW provided notice that they would not renew the contract, Orange City Council took the initiative to ensure a seamless transition to an alternative service provider.

Following careful consideration and a thorough selection process, Orange City Council contracted with Canobolas Family Pet Hospital to assume responsibility for pound services. This decision was driven by the hospital's reputation for excellence in veterinary care, its commitment to animal welfare, and its capability to meet the specific needs outlined by Orange City Council.

To further enhance the provision of pound services and meet the standards set by the Companion Animals Act, Orange City Council invested \$1.5 million in a purpose-built facility. This state-of-the-art facility, operational since May 2021, is equipped with exercise yards, insulated kennels, a vet room, a hydro-bath, and dedicated cages for both dogs and cats. Including 32 dog cages, 18 cat cages, and four undercover kennels for after-hours drop-offs, the facility reflects Orange City Council's commitment to creating a safe and comfortable environment for animals in its care.

The transition from relying on a charitable organisation to in-house provision has allowed Orange City Council to maintain a more direct and community-focused approach to pound services. This shift empowers the council to tailor services to the specific needs of the local community, ensuring efficient and compassionate care for stray animals. By establishing an in-house provision of pound services, Orange City Council continues to fulfil its obligations under the Companion Animals Act. The purpose-built facility meets statutory requirements and exceeds them, setting a benchmark for the quality of animal care within the community.

Maitland, Dungog, and Cessnock councils used to rely on RSPCA NSW's Hunter Adoption Centre to provide pound services to their local communities. As part of our ongoing strategic review and in alignment with our mission, the contract was not renewed.

Maitland Council took proactive steps to ensure the continuation of high-quality pound services for the community, with commendable foresight and planning, they established a

new facility that not only serves the Maitland area but also extends its support to the Dungog and Cessnock councils.

This new facility includes exercise yards and dedicated cages for both dogs and cats, and other animals, providing the animals with care during their stay. This transition from relying on a charity to a council-operated facility is a significant step forward. It demonstrates the council's dedication to animal welfare and ability to manage these essential services effectively. RSPCA NSW continues to work closely with the Maitland, Dungog, and Cessnock councils, offering our expertise and support where needed.

RSPCA NSW has also successfully supported Broken Hill City Council and Newcastle City Council in transitioning to successful alternatives. We continue to support both Wollongong City Council and Shellharbour Council as they transition to new partners and facilities early in the new year.

11. What programs does RSPCA NSW run that assist councils in managing animals in their local government area?

12. What other ways does RSPCA NSW support councils in our state?

Answer to supplementary questions 11 and 12:

Programs offered by the RSPCA NSW play a crucial role in supporting local councils in NSW by addressing various community needs related to pet ownership. Each program contributes to the well-being of both pets and their owners, while benefiting local councils.

1. Aged Care Program:

- *Objective: The Aged Care program aims to support elderly pet owners, senior Indigenous pet owners, and palliative care patients by keeping them and their pets together for as long as possible.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Temporary foster accommodation and emergency pet boarding during the owner's medical treatment or respite.*
 - *Assistance with veterinary treatment to ensure the pet's health.*
 - *Home visits to assist with basic pet care, grooming, and transportation to local veterinarians.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Reduces the likelihood of elderly pet owners relinquishing their pets to shelters due to health challenges.*
 - *Addresses potential concerns related to the welfare of pets belonging to vulnerable populations.*

2. Community Domestic Violence Program:

- *Objective: This program aims to provide practical solutions for pet owners leaving situations of domestic violence by offering safe housing and care for their pets.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Temporary foster accommodation and emergency pet boarding.*
 - *Financial assistance for veterinary treatment, impound fees, and transport fees.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Mitigates challenges faced by individuals leaving violent relationships, reducing the burden on local shelters and services.*
 - *Promotes the safety and well-being of both human and animal victims of domestic violence.*

3. Community Homelessness Program:

- *Objective: Addresses the emotional, mental, and physical benefits of the relationships between homeless individuals and their pets.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Temporary foster accommodation and emergency pet boarding.*
 - *Financial assistance for veterinary treatment and impound fees.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Alleviates distress for homeless pet owners, preventing them from surrendering their pets due to hardship.*
 - *Supports the mental well-being of homeless individuals and indirectly contributes to community welfare.*

4. Outreach Animal Assistance Programs:

- *Objective: Targets overpopulation of unwanted companion animals and provides core veterinary services, reducing the number of animals entering pounds and shelters.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Subsidised desexing, microchipping, and vaccinations through schemes like CAWS and Community Vaccination Days.*
 - *Education campaigns to raise awareness about responsible pet ownership.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Collaborative efforts with local councils reduce the burden on council-run shelters and veterinary services.*
 - *Contributes to community awareness, leading to a decrease in stray animals and associated issues.*

5. Indigenous Community Companion Animal Health Program:

- *Objective: Improves the health and safety of Aboriginal children and families in remote communities by addressing the health and welfare of companion animals.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Veterinary services and education on animal and human health, well-being, and responsible pet ownership.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Reduces the prevalence of stray dogs, lowering the risk of disease spread and other issues in remote communities.*
 - *Enhances the overall health and welfare of both animals and humans in Indigenous communities.*

6. Disaster Relief and Support Program:

- *Objective: Provides support to communities following natural disasters, caring for pets when people lose their homes and supplying essentials for pet owners who have lost their homes.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Emergency care for pets affected by natural disasters, including temporary accommodation and essentials for pet owners who lost their homes.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Prevents an influx of displaced animals relying on the local council pound, thereby alleviating strain on local animal services.*
 - *Supports community recovery efforts by addressing the specific needs of pet owners affected by natural disasters.*

7. School Education Program:

- *Objective: RSPCA NSW invests in the future through education programs, school visits, and resources for teachers to teach generations to come kindness and compassion towards all animals, and how to responsibly care for them.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Education programs for primary and secondary students and professional development for teachers and early childhood educators.*
 - *Programs in the school holidays for children aged eight to 17 years and family fun events on weekends.*
 - *Partnerships with the NSW Government and Councils to promote campaigns like "Adopt Don't Shop" through school engagement.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Promotes responsible pet ownership and compassion towards animals from an early age, reducing future instances of neglect or abandonment.*
 - *Strengthens partnerships with local communities and councils to build a culture of animal welfare awareness.*

8. Keeping Cats Safe at Home Program:

- *Objective: The "Keeping Cats Safe at Home" project is run by RSPCA NSW thanks to a \$2.5 million grant from the NSW Government Environmental Trust. This 4-year behavior change project aims to improve care for pet cats through responsible cat ownership and to protect wildlife from cat predation. Keeping Cats Safe at Home aims to encourage and support cat owners to prevent their cats from roaming away from their properties both to keep cats safe and to protect native wildlife.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Encouraging pet owners to keep cats within the boundaries of their property to prevent harm from accidents, diseases, and attacks from other animals.*
 - *Collaborating with 11 local councils across NSW, consulting with local stakeholders, including veterinarians, wildlife organisations, and the general community.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*
 - *Alleviates concerns related to the impact of domestic cats on local wildlife, promoting responsible cat ownership and reducing the need for local wildlife management.*
 - *Fosters collaboration between RSPCA NSW and local councils to address issues related to cat predation and wildlife protection.*
 - *The project has created tailored toolkits for 11 partner council areas across NSW as well as resources to equip cat lovers everywhere with the knowledge and skills to help their cats live their best lives at home.*
 - *Social science and ecology research monitors the effectiveness of the campaign so we can apply what we learn in other locations in NSW and further afield.*

9. Rehoming and Community Support Program:

- *Objective: RSPCA NSW operates an ongoing Rehoming and Community Support Program dedicated to the continuous rehoming of animals in the community, including those that are stray or surrendered. This initiative aims to find loving homes for animals while assisting local councils in managing their populations.*
- *Services Provided:*
 - *Ongoing rehabilitation and rehoming efforts for animals, with a focus on finding suitable and caring homes for strays and surrendered pets.*
- *Impact on Local Councils:*

- *It helps alleviate the burden on local council pounds by actively engaging in rehoming efforts and reducing the number of animals within council facilities.*
- *Collaborative initiatives ensure a smoother process for local councils in managing stray and surrendered animals, fostering a shared responsibility for the welfare of these pets.*
- *The Rehoming and Community Support Program offers ongoing support to councils in managing their responsibilities while ensuring that animals, whether stray or surrendered, find loving and permanent homes within the community.*
- *Around 50% of our capacity is used by stray and surrendered animals across the state. These thousands of animals would otherwise need to be cared for by the local council pound.*

RSPCA NSW's programs provide essential services that directly impact the welfare of pets and their owners, ultimately contributing to the well-being of communities. By addressing specific challenges faced by vulnerable populations, these programs indirectly relieve pressure on local councils and services, promoting responsible pet ownership and community welfare.

13. Are there any other matters RSPCA NSW wishes to clarify following the appearance at the Upper House Pound Inquiry?

Answer to supplementary question 13:

RSPCA NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that cares for, treats, protects, and rehomes thousands of animals across the state. As a charity, our mission to prevent animal cruelty, improve animal welfare and keep people and animals together can only be done when we acknowledge the crucial role that people play in keeping animals safe.

We run six shelters, three veterinary hospitals, two canine and one feline rehabilitation facility dedicated to treating, rehabilitating, and rehoming animals. In addition, over 20 volunteer branches spread widely across NSW, run community fundraising events to assist with local microchipping and desexing drives in lower-income communities. Along with cats and dogs, RSPCA NSW cares for and protects all animals, from horses to rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, goats, pigs, cattle, sheep and wildlife.

RSPCA NSW's financial position drew criticism from a Member of the NSW Pounds Inquiry committee. We want to make clear that it is essential to understand that much of the assets outlined in our public financial statements primarily consist of our shelters and vet hospitals and do not necessarily represent liquid funds available for immediate use. Moreover, the organisation faces unique economic challenges, including the absence of recurrent funding from the NSW government.

We continue to fundraise to support our operational budget needs every year and to try and increase our support services to keep up with the demand from the NSW community. If we didn't fundraise, we would very soon go bankrupt. Much of the cash that was referred to are restricted funds and tied grants, which are ring-fenced for specific capital projects we are yet to complete, or money that has been bequeathed to us through the generosity of an animal lover and their commitment to improving animal welfare beyond their life. These funds can still be in probate or have been left with specific instructions to us on how to use it, and it is important to us that we honour these wishes.

While we are a charity and rely on donations, we also spend much time making sure we spend those donations carefully, responsibly, sustainably, and in line with the intention in which it was given. As any responsible business or not-for-profit, we must ensure our longevity for the animals of NSW. Holding funds in reserve is crucial for responding to unexpected challenges or emergencies. Without recurrent government funding, maintaining a financial buffer ensures that RSPCA NSW can promptly address unforeseen circumstances, such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, or economic downturns. All of which we have experienced in the last three years alone. We are proud to be an organisation that has stood the test of time and continues to show up for the animals and people of NSW every day.

The same Member shared concerns about Blue Mountains City Council's ability to operate a Pound. On November 13, 2023, Blue Mountains City Council representatives first came to inspect the site. On December 12, 2023, RSPCA NSW met with the Local Member and a Blue Mountains City Council representative, who expressed several options the council is considering to deliver future pound services. One option expressed is to use the Mort Street site. With this being shared, RSPCA NSW will work with Blue Mountains City Council to find a mutually agreeable solution that provides the best outcome.

RSPCA NSW is a membership-based organisation, and while some members, especially those in the Blue Mountains area, might favour seeing the Mort Street site gifted to the local Council, other members across the state have different views. There are also valid concerns about how a charity gifting an asset worth more than \$2.5 million may breach federal laws. We are working to balance these views across our organisation by consulting with all members. We have undertaken this alongside opening negotiations with Blue Mountains City Council. From the outset, we have favoured the Council taking over the operations of the Mort Street Animal Care Facility. This will ensure they can manage animals in their LGA as they are required to under the Companion Animals Act and the Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act with little disruption to the level of service provided to the Blue Mountains community.

RSPCA NSW faced a significant operational loss last year of almost half a million dollars, emphasising its financial challenges. Running at a loss, despite substantial assets, underscores the cost-intensive and ever-increasing nature of animal welfare. RSPCA NSW must carefully manage its budget to ensure financial sustainability amid economic uncertainties. Last financial year, we helped 14,535 animals receive the care they need. It was only possible because 61,526 generous supporters donated a phenomenal \$40,516,594.

With the statutory duty provided under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979), we deliver the largest animal enforcement unit in the country, with a team of inspectors dedicated to investigating instances of alleged animal cruelty across NSW and a call centre equipped to handle over 15,000 cruelty complaints per year alongside an additional 60,000 calls for advice, support and direction when it comes to animals in their home or community.

It is true that over the years, we have sought to partner with councils in areas of need to operate their pounds and assist with local companion animal management strategies. Whilst this work was aligned to our organisations strategic plan then, as we have evolved as an organisation and the needs of the animals and the communities has changed and increased, over time this work - whilst still an important part of the animal welfare puzzle – has become less aligned with our core mission. It is no exaggeration that this work with councils has, at times, come at the cost of our mission due to stray animals consuming much of our resources.

Animal Welfare is an exceptionally large and complex industry, and many organisations and agencies must play a role if it is to be supported properly. It is too big for any one organisation

to service on their own. We are uniquely positioned as an organisation to deliver a comprehensive and wholistic enforcement division alongside a critical and very relevant community support program, so focusing our future efforts on preventing animal cruelty and ensuring that we can accommodate the animals most in need, the mistreated animals, the neglected animals and the animals suffering from hardship and crisis alongside their committed owners in our shelter network is and should always be our priority.

RSPCA NSW is uniquely placed to deliver the best animal crime enforcement unit in the world, and by focusing our efforts on this, we will take more significant strides towards achieving our goal of preventing animal cruelty. To do this, we are in the process of finalising the cessation of all council pound management contracts across the state.

Despite the move away from impound work, it is important to us that we continue working closely with the local government sector, there are still many proactive areas of animal welfare that we can partner on. We have had incredible success in reducing pound operational costs through our targeted high-intensity cat desexing programs that target low-income households and areas that have challenges with cat population numbers delivering positive returns on investment following the implementation of these strategies.

We have repeatedly extended an open invitation to all Council's pound facilities to contact us before euthanising any rehomingable animal they cannot continue providing care for. We know that capacity constraints can put a lot of pressure on a pound and always appreciate the opportunity to give animals a second chance if a council has yet to be able to rehome it during the enforced holding times under the Act. So much so that we invested in a portal to streamline the transfer of animals from Council's pound facilities, where council staff can complete a quick questionnaire about the animal and submit it to RSPCA NSW for intake consideration. The portal has been live since July 1, 2022. But, we can't serve two masters. RSPCA NSW operates the country's largest animal welfare enforcement agency on behalf of the NSW Government. This leads to vast volumes of animals being seized from cruel owners and in our care at a moment's notice. It creates an impossible situation to manage this while also having to accept, care for, and rehabilitate animals seized by councils. We're determined to prioritise the most needy animals, and we don't shy away from the difficult decision not to renew any council pound management contracts, but we are confident in the knowledge that this is the best decision for the animals of NSW.

Many councils have benefited from the RSPCA subsidising their pound operations for decades and want that to continue. But our generous supporters and members have made it clear to the organisation that they don't want their donations used to help a council with more than a hundred million dollars in annual revenue over rescuing and rehabilitating animals who've been victims of cruelty, abuse and neglect. To support all councils across the state, the better use of our donations is expanding the prevention and community programs we already run. While a difficult decision, it means that our organisation can prioritise the animals most in need - those who've been victims of criminal levels of animal cruelty. We encourage all Members of the Committee to read our 2023 Annual Report and Financial Report, which can be accessed here: <https://www.rspcansw.org.au/annual-report/>

Our organisation has operated for 150 years in NSW, and we stand on the shoulders of many past members and supporters who have worked tirelessly to help animals in need and create a financially strong organisation. It would be reckless to diminish their legacy without careful consideration of the impacts that may have on future efforts to prevent cruelty to animals across the state.

DATE 13 December 2023

1. **The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Just getting an understanding of the pricing of dogs and cats in the shelter for new owners, how is that determined?
(TROY WILKIE: I'm not sure if anyone's brought a price list.
KATHRYN JURD: No, I do know that we have different rates for adult and puppy or kitten prices. We sometimes run specials for our senior citizens—that is, senior citizens within the shelter—to try to get them loving homes in the latter years of their lives. Every now and again the RSPCA nationwide does a "clear the shelters" type day where we devote our advertising resources to those animals who might have been in care for hundreds of days. Those animals are our shelter favourites. They're animals that the staff really are very emotionally invested in, so we try to devote our advertising resources to getting those animals good homes. The quantum is on our website, but we can take the actual figures on notice and provide the Committee those details later.)

Answer to question on notice 1:

RSPCA NSW adoption fees help to cover some of the costs associated with preparing each animal for adoption. Our animals come fully vet-checked and, depending on species, desexed, microchipped and vaccinated. The cost of caring for each animal that comes through our doors far exceeds the amount we charge for each adoption, but these fees go back into caring for more abandoned, injured, neglected and sick animals. It is not uncommon for people to pay upwards of \$5,000 to purchase a pet from a breeder in NSW – in actual fact, it is becoming more common for that cost to be closer to the \$10,000 mark. We believe that our pricing is reasonable and that our rehoming principles are ethical and in line with community expectations of a rescue animal in 2023.

ADOPTION FEES (GST exempt)

Canines

Puppy (under 12mths) \$580

Dogs (over 12mths) \$480

Felines

Kitten (under 6mths) \$250

Cat (over 6mths) \$200

Pocket Pets

Rabbits & Ferrets \$70

Guinea Pigs \$50

Rats & Mice \$5

Birds

Birds may be subject to individual pricing depending on veterinary services provided. Refer to Avian Species Price Guide. Please note RSPCA NSW cannot adopt species requiring a license.

Refer NPWS

Class 1 Birds \$8 – \$28

Class 2 Birds min \$50

Class 3 Birds min \$70

Class 4 Birds \$165 – \$455

Class 1 Birds: Budgerigars, Canaries, Dove – Domestic, Dove – Fantail, Dove – Peaceful, Finch – Zebra, Lovebird – Peachface, Pigeon – Crested, Quail, Quail – Brown, Quail – King, Red-Rumped Parrot, Turtledove – Spotted.

Class 2 Birds: Bourkes Parrot, Cockatiel, Finch – Blue Faced Parrot Finch, Finch – Gouldian, Finch – Painted, Finch – Star, Lorikeet – Musk, Lovebird – Black Masked, Lovebird – Fischer’s, Partridge

Class 3 Birds: Rosella – Eastern, Scarlet-Chested Parrot, Cockatoo – Sulphur Crested, Conure Parrot, Corella – Little, Corella – Long Billed, Corella – Western, Elegant Parrot, Galah, Indian Ringneck, Lorikeet – Rainbow, Princess Parrot, Quail – Little Button, Quail – Painted Button, Quail – Stubble.

Class 4 Birds: African Grey Parrot, Alexandrine Parrot, Hooded Parrot, Lorikeet – Red Collared, Lorikeet – Scalybreasted, Port Lincoln Parrot, Quaker Parrot, Red-Capped Parrot, Rosella – Adelaide, Rosella – Pale-headed, Rosella – Western, Rosella – Yellow, Rosella – Yellow, Twenty-Eight Parrot, Yellow Crowned Amazon Parrot.

Livestock

Poultry \$12-\$45

Goats, Sheep & Pigs \$60

Cattle min \$250

Horses \$1,000

RSPCA NSW recently announced their ‘Find Forever Homes’ mission with \$29 adoptions on 3-5 November 2023, with adoption fees reduced to \$29 for all animals available for adoption, across the state. The goal was to rehome as many animals as possible over the three-day adoption drive. The weekend saw more than 260 animals find their forever home. We regularly offer discounts like this to help rehome animals.

With animals staying with us longer than ever before, it’s imperative that we shine a light on their incredible personalities and do everything we can to help them find their forever homes. Adoption drives like this are a great way to help people who have been thinking about adopting, find their forever friend.

Although adoption fees will be drastically reduced, normal adoption procedures apply to ensure each animal is matched with the right family. This includes one-on-ones with

prospective adoptive parents and future fur-siblings. All animals have already been desexed, vaccinated, microchipped and undergone veterinary checks and behavioural assessments.

- 2. The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: How much does your CEO at RSPCA get paid annually for their salary, including any packaging benefits?
(TROY WILKIE: I'd have no idea. It's none of my business. I can take it on notice.)**

Answer to question on notice 2:

RSPCA NSW upholds a transparent and accountable process in determining the CEO's compensation, a responsibility entrusted to the organisation's Board of Directors. The Board, comprised of members elected by our organisation's branch members, is pivotal in overseeing RSPCA NSW's governance and financial decisions.

The CEO's compensation is established through a comprehensive and fair evaluation process that considers various factors, including industry benchmarks, the CEO's performance, the overall health of the organisation, including multiple animal welfare and rehoming KPIs, and the complexity of the role. This process is designed to attract and retain top-tier leadership talent, ensuring that RSPCA NSW can effectively fulfil its mission of promoting animal welfare and advocacy. While transparency is a fundamental value for RSPCA NSW, the decision not to publish the CEO's specific compensation details is based on several considerations. RSPCA NSW remains committed to transparency in its governance practices. Members are encouraged to engage with the Board during annual meetings, where the Board presents financial reports, and members can seek clarification or raise concerns.

This approach allows for open communication between the organisation's leadership and its members, fostering trust and accountability. By adhering to a balanced and well-considered approach to CEO compensation, RSPCA NSW aims to strike a careful equilibrium between transparency and privacy, recognising that responsible disclosure practices are essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring effective organisational leadership.

- 3. The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Can you confirm that two days after RSPCA announced leaving the Blue Mountains facility, your CEO went on ABC 702 and stated that "the volunteers are too difficult" as reasons for pulling out of the Blue Mountains contract?**

(TROY WILKIE: I'm not aware of that.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

The CHAIR: It's up to the witness if they would like to take that on notice.

TROY WILKIE: Sure, I'll take it on notice.)

Answer to question on notice 3:

We have been unable to find a quote matching or close to matching the one described in this question. The transcript of the interview, as provided by iSentia and unedited, reads:

"I haven't heard any of this. Is there across the state or across the country, opposition to the RSPCA Do you face the same sort of difficulties about Central Coast sites or city sites or anywhere else? No, not only to this. Only Blue Mountains, correct? Right. Not to this extent. A

nd should I say he's right, The community commenced this facility. That is absolutely right. What is always missed in that is that it's cost RSPCA New South Wales somewhere between \$3 and \$500,000 loss a year. We've managed to keep it afloat. We've tried to do some upgrades and it's met with opposition. And when an organisation is faced with the prospects of people wanting to lie down in front of bulldozers for fear of an upgrade, we need to change the act. James Takes, correspondent from Whareumu, says the RSPCA is not telling the whole story. That's you, Steve. The renovations reduced services and the amount of animal accommodation. That's what the community was peacefully objecting to. And you know what, James? The thing is across the state, across the years of animal welfare service work, we have seen a reduction in animals. That is a good thing. Whenever we construct something or upgrade something, we can track that footprint because where we'd prefer to spend our funds is out in the community keeping these animals away from us and making sure that they stay with their animals, sorry, stay with their owners as opposed to being stuck in the shelter. Yeah. What's working? You said that you put more emphasis into prevention. What do you think is working? We've got a number of things working, James. We've got programmes that include supporting homeless people, domestic violence victims, aged care residents that need help with their animals when they seek health care themselves. We've constantly got demand on our organisation to subsidise veterinary services. We've got a range of education programmes that we do and all of this including in the Blue Mountains and with the Blue Mountains City Council where we've partnered together to drive some of these prevention programmes in the community to help everybody reduce the quantity of animals that end up in shelters. That's the point. Yeah, that's the aim. Steve, thanks for talking to us today. Good on you, James. Thanks. for just hearing us out. That's all right. Steve Coleman. I think that's you know, that's kind of in our charter, really. But always happy to hear both sides of the story. Oddly enough, Steve Coleman, the CEO of the RSPCA in New South Wales. Now, we've heard from the mayor, we've heard from Steve. If you're one of these people that's been protesting about it, tell us what the issue is, because I'm not hearing it."

- 4. The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: My question is to the RSPCA. In 2021 the RSPCA NSW received \$1.34 million in State Government grant funding for a purpose-built wildlife and companion animal facility in Katoomba. Has that facility been built?**

(TROY WILKIE: No.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: What are you doing with that grant funding?

TROY WILKIE: I will take that on notice.

Answer to question on notice 4:

Please refer to RSPCA NSW's answer to the supplementary question on the same subject.

- 5. The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: How many veterinarians and animal welfare specialists does RSPCA employ in New South Wales?**

GEMMA MA: I'll have to take the exact number on notice, but we have at least 20 veterinarians. We have several qualified behaviourists, including a veterinarian with clinical behaviourist qualifications who consults for our shelters, and a whole behaviour and rehabilitation team, all of whom have tertiary qualifications in animal behaviour.)

Answer to question on notice 5:

RSPCA NSW is proud to highlight our dedicated and highly skilled team working tirelessly across various regions to champion the cause of animal welfare. Our organisation employs a total of 32.4 FTE veterinary doctors and 46.1 FTE veterinary nurses. They are distributed across our clinics in Sydney, Hunter, and Broken Hill, and they also travel across the state to deliver services outside of these locations both in communities and at our other, regional facilities. These veterinarians play a crucial role in providing essential medical care, conducting examinations, and ensuring the overall health and well-being of the animals under our care. Our three hospitals not only deliver best practice, critical health care to animals of NSW, but they are teaching hospitals that form part of a very important relationship with the University of Sydney. We provide experience opportunities and mentorship to many new veterinary graduates each year which contributes to the professional capabilities of an industry that we know is struggling. More information on this can be found in our submission and subsequent evidence in the Veterinary Workforce Shortage in NSW Inquiry.

In addition to our veterinary professionals, RSPCA NSW boasts a diverse and extensive team of 139.7 FTE Animal Care Staff. This includes individuals with specialisations in animal care and husbandry, animal rehabilitation, canine behavioural specialists, feline behavioural specialists, avian specialists, equine science specialists, certified wildlife carers, vet technicians and assistants, and many more passionate and talented individuals committed to the welfare of animals, so much so that they have dedicated their working capacity to it. Our collective expertise enables us to address a wide range of needs, from medical care and rehabilitation to behavioural support, adoption counselling and specialised attention for the diverse animals in our care.

At RSPCA NSW, we recognise that the well-being of animals goes beyond meeting their basic needs, and our team reflects this holistic approach. Each staff member contributes their unique skills and knowledge to create a comprehensive and compassionate environment for the animals entrusted to us. As an RTO, we are committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional development, ensuring that our staff remains at the forefront of industry standards and best practices and that we are providing an education and career pathway for people wanting to get into the animal welfare industry.

The collaboration among our veterinary and animal specialty staff and our enforcement unit allows us to provide comprehensive care, rehabilitation, and support to animals in need. These three expert teams deliver the most comprehensive animal welfare program in NSW and we remain grateful for the dedication and expertise of our entire team as we continue to work towards a future where every animal is treated with kindness and compassion. We invite the public to learn more about our team and the vital work they do to positively impact the lives of animals across New South Wales.

DATE 13 December 2023

1. The response ***“No, I do know that we have different rates for adult and puppy or kitten prices. We sometimes run specials for our senior citizens—that is, senior citizens within the shelter—to try to get them loving homes in the latter years of their lives. Every now and again the RSPCA nationwide does a "clear the shelters" type day where we devote our advertising resources to those animals who might have been in care for hundreds of days. Those animals are our shelter favourites. They're animals that the staff really are very emotionally invested in, so we try to devote our advertising resources to getting those animals good homes. The quantum is on our website, but we can take the actual figures on notice and provide the Committee those details later.”*** is attributed to GEMMA MA and should be corrected to be attributed to KATHRYN JURD.