



19. SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS – FEBRUARY 2024

1. You have seen a lot of council pounds throughout NSW: what are some of the key welfare issues you see in the way pounds are currently built and operated?

a. What are the worst pounds that need the most urgent attention?

b. Why are these the worst pounds?

- what is happening at those pounds that leads you to identify them specifically as requiring the most urgent attention?

c. How do we stop animals entering pounds in the first place?

- what laws need to be introduced?

RESPONSE 1. Key Welfare Issues in Pound Operations.

- a.** The pounds demanding immediate attention typically exhibit deficiencies in facilities, overcrowding, and insufficient resources to adequately address the fundamental welfare requirements of animals. While it is tempting to identify councils with lower resources, such an approach is deemed unfair by ASA. Instead, ASA proposes establishing a baseline of welfare as the initial step. It is noteworthy that certain small, older pounds with committed staff demonstrate commendable efforts, whereas some well-equipped facilities lack engaged staff, resulting in suboptimal animal welfare outcomes.
- b.** These facilities may encounter challenges in accessing appropriate veterinary care, contend with elevated euthanasia rates, and face difficulties in ensuring adequate shelter and enrichment for animals. These concerns are often intensified by a lack of access to welfare groups and internal support, contributing to emotional fatigue among staff members. This, in turn, can result in a diminished capacity to provide optimal welfare within these facilities.
- c.** Proposing legislative measures to enforce responsible pet ownership, advocating for mandatory training of prospective owners prior to acquiring a new companion animal,



emphasizing compulsory microchipping and desexing, and advocating for stricter breeding regulations are strategic steps to proactively address the issue of animals entering pounds.

ASA contends that additional regulatory measures should be implemented for breeders, including the establishment of a licensing system to curb the occurrence of unregistered litters

2. What do we need to change to ensure more animals are adopted from pounds?

RESPONSE 2. Increasing Animal Adoptions.

Implementing effective adoption programs, encompassing outreach campaigns, collaborations with rescue organizations, and active community engagement, will significantly enhance adoption rates. In addition, there is a need for establishing a cohesive network of pounds in NSW, supported by regional centres of excellence. This network would facilitate potential new owners in meeting and adopting animals outside of their immediate geographical location.

ASA recommends consulting with PIAA to explore how certain pet stores or pet supply outlets could contribute to pound rehoming efforts, either by organizing rehoming days or advertising animals available for adoption.

Furthermore, ASA suggests the establishment of a robust foster network as an integral component of the education process for potential new owners. This network would be fed into by all registered rehoming groups and members of the public within NSW.

Improved public awareness regarding the advantages of adopting from pounds, along with streamlined adoption processes, is vital for boosting adoption rates. Additionally, a comprehensive advertising and communications strategy is recommended to educate the public that animals from pounds are not inherently 'broken' but rather victims of circumstances beyond their control within the current system.

3. Do you think there would be value in a Government funded audit of every council pound facility, to get a baseline of where we are up to and what needs to be improved?

If yes, please explain why.



RESPONSE 3. Government-Funded Audits.

Yes, a government-funded audit of each council pound facility would offer a foundational comprehension of the present state of pounds, establishing a baseline for welfare provision, identifying shortcomings, and prioritising areas for continuous enhancement.

The findings from these audits could be disseminated within the Local Government Area (LGA) network to leverage and exchange positive outcomes, as well as to share insights gained from initiatives that may not have yielded anticipated results.

Such audits can serve as a catalyst for targeted interventions, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed, this would serve constant improvement in welfare provision across the state.

4. Do you think most Councils are financially able to upgrade their pound facilities to an adequate standard, or are they going to need State Government funding?

RESPONSE 4. Financial Ability for Pound Upgrades.

Some councils may struggle financially to upgrade pound facilities to an adequate standard. However, a baseline of welfare needs to be created to truly manage the 'gap' between councils.

ASA recommend that the regional centres of excellence model would provide ongoing support to the multiple LGA's at once while providing aggregated reporting to government about progress.

5. This inquiry has received conflicting evidence – some have argued councils are unable to afford pound upgrades, and others have argued that councils have the money but are choosing to spend it on other priorities. Do you think there is truth in both perspectives, that councils need State Government financial support to be able to upgrade to the standard needed but funding also needs to come from councils? If you agree or disagree with this, please explain why.

RESPONSE 5. Council Funding and State Support.

There is likely truth in both perspectives; some councils may genuinely lack funds, while others might prioritise spending on different projects.



ASA recommends that a baseline of welfare be created, that considers population density in these areas and assumed pet ownership numbers which would inform the necessary facilities and funds required for rebuilding or improvements needed.

In regard to these facilities another consideration needs to be made by State government and that is a model whereby some more financially capable local governments, build pound facilities with the view to taking on animals from other areas as an income generative model.

This model needs to be legislated for and overseen specifically as a stand alone model as it brings with it specific welfare concerns that need to be monitored very closely.

A balanced approach involving State Government financial support and contributions from councils is essential to achieve comprehensive upgrades to pound facilities.

6. One of your recommendations is to ‘create a network of impound facilities’ that can work with rescue organisations to rehome animals. Can you explain what you are envisioning here with a ‘network’ of pounds – how would this be different to the current system?

RESPONSE 6. Creating a Network of Impound Facilities

As previously outlined ASA recommends a working network of council pounds that should encompass the whole state. While we agree that there is a network of pounds, it is not functional for the rehoming of animals. It is possible to get the network to the functionality where a dog impounded in Bathurst could be rehomed in Eden, should the pounds have a communication channel that is effective, and the public can access the information about the animals effectively. Underpinning this model should be a transport system / organisation for the movement of these animals to ensure timely transfer of these animals when required to move from one region to another. This model is obviously complimented by a working relationship with rehoming groups, PIAA and a solid network of foster carers.

This network would streamline communication, share resources, and increase the chances of finding suitable homes for animals.



7. Amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) were passed last year requiring council pounds to take certain steps to advertise animals and work with rehoming organisations before the pound considers euthanasia. However, the POCTA enforcement agencies like AWL and RSPCA are not authorised to enforce these new requirements – do you see this as a problem and if so, why? Should the POCTA enforcement agencies be given authority under the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) so these laws can be enforced? Please give details of your position.

RESPONSE 7. Enforcement of Companion Animals Act Amendments.

Granting authority to POCTA enforcement agencies for enforcing the amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) is crucial. Any legislation or even standard for that matter, is not a baseline if it is not regulated, especially when considering welfare standards. Without this oversight from the ACO's (Authorised Charitable Organisation) there will be no baseline maintained, there should also be an education program about what POCTA allows for and how compliance to this legislation is required.

Further, a consideration of the term responsible person within the Act needs to be addressed as there will be more than one person responsible for these animals ultimately under direction from an Executive. Should there be a prosecution, who would be pursued?

ASA additionally asserts that there are overlooked concerns associated with having two ACO's, including the potential for duplication, instances of the public lodging complaints with both organisations, variations in evidence management methodologies, and divergent approaches to welfare provision. These factors introduce additional risks to the maintenance of a consistent baseline for welfare provision. Consequently, the scale of either ACO's operation becomes a significant consideration in addressing these challenges.

8. What are some of the challenges you see regarding council-conducted behavioural assessments – are they being done well at the moment? What needs to be improved?

- a. **In respect to the methods of killing animals in pounds how are animals being killed if vets are not available? What do you think the law should be?**
- b. **What staffing ratios are there in pounds – are there any?**



- c. **What sort of pressure does inadequate staffing levels place on staff?
Is this a WH&S risk in some pounds?**
- d. **Can low staff also impact animal welfare - in what ways?**
- e. **There have been some mixed responses to the amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1999 (NSW) requiring pounds to make efforts to rehome animals – one group representing rangers argued these new laws should be relaxed to allow killing sooner, however, other councils like Tamworth said the laws have led to great welfare improvements for the animals. - What is your perspective on these new rehoming laws and how they are working - should they be retained how they are or changed in any way?**

RESPONSE 8. Challenges in Pound Operations

- a. In situations where veterinarians are unavailable, councils may resort to using firearms as an alternative method of euthanasia, as observed in Bourke a few years ago. Nonetheless, the audit process should establish explicit guidelines and regulations stipulating humane methods for euthanasia. ASA contends that there is a necessity for a more stringent regulation of the use of firearms in conjunction with these guidelines.
- b. Staffing ratios should be established to ensure the adequate care and welfare of animals in pounds, this can be supplemented by training pound staff in simple enrichment techniques.
- c. Insufficient staffing levels present a notable Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S) risk and have the potential to jeopardize the well-being of animals. Inadequate staffing may compel personnel to hasten tasks such as cleaning, feeding, and exercise, thereby increasing the likelihood of disease outbreaks, including zoonosis. Moreover, there is an elevated risk of increased incidents of bites, and animals may become trigger-stacked, rendering them less suitable for rehoming.
- d. Insufficient staff can lead to compromised animal welfare through neglect, lack of socialisation, and reduced quality of care.



- e. The amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) promoting rehoming efforts should be retained. Councils experiencing welfare improvements demonstrate the positive impact of these laws, emphasizing the need for continued commitment to rehoming initiatives.

These responses aim to address the key inquiries into pounds and animal welfare in New South Wales, providing insights and recommendations for improvement.