

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Wollondilly Shire Council

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Legislative Council
Portfolio Committee 8 – Customer Service
Inquiry into pounds in New South Wales

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SUBMISSION : INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Wollondilly Shire Council is located approximately 2 hours south west of the Sydney CBD. Council operates a small, aging animal shelter which has the following capacity:

- 14 standard dog kennels;
 - 4 dangerous dog enclosures;
 - 16 cat enclosures;
 - 4 outdoor dog runs;
 - 4 small cat exercise areas.
- Fenced area for small animals impounded

This submission will address all Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE -

a) *Resourcing challenges affection New South Wales pounds, including the adequacy of funding given towards the operation of pounds by local and state governments*

- *Staffing levels to provide 7 day coverage for animal care*
- *We have a small team and rostering for weekends during times of Annual Leave and illness can be a challenge.*
- *No funding is provided to Councils to carry out training eg., temperament assessment and safety training for staff*

b) *The adequacy of Council's pound buildings*

- *Aging facility which is costly to maintain*
- *Kennels are not insulated however have blinds to assist with temperature control (not used in windy weather)*
- *Kennel sizes are quite generous*
- *Exercise runs are very generous in size*
- *Additional exercise runs could be utilised at most times.*
- *Medical room*
- *Laundry and storage area*
- *Separate cattery with feeding area.*
- *Freezer and storage rooms*
- *Reception area*
- *Well maintained bush setting*

c) *Welfare challenges facing animals in pounds across New South Wales, including the provision of housing, bedding, feeding, exercise, enrichment, veterinary treatment, vaccination and desexing*

- *The cost of running a shelter to provide the basic and enrichment needs required ensuring the monitoring and on-going health of the animals impounded. The shelter has to compete for funds with other operational council needs such as roads maintenance etc.*
- *Council is fortunate to receive regular donations from the Community eg., bedding, dog food, blankets, treats and toys.*
- *Council also has the support of a local veterinary surgeon who is reasonably priced.*

d) *The adequacy of the laws, regulations and codes governing New South Wales pounds, including the companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 – Dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments (1996), as well as the adequacy of the current enforcement and compliance regime*

Recent amendments to the Companion Animals Act – specifically Clause 64B – whereby:

- 1) *A council must, before taking action under section 64 or 64A to destroy a seized or surrendered animal—*
 - (a) give written notice to at least 2 rehoming organisations that the animal is available for rehoming, and*
 - (b) take reasonable steps to advertise on a webpage or through a social media platform that the animal is available for rehoming.*
- 2) *The notice given under subsection (1)(a) must specify the period of time, not less than 7 days from the date the notice is given, during which the animal is available for rehoming.*
- 3) *If a rehoming organisation, whether or not the organisation was given written notice under subsection (1)(a), gives the council written notice that it is able to rehome an animal, the council must—*
 - (a) not destroy the animal, and*
 - (b) make arrangements for the collection of the animal.*

Council has for many years had a zero tolerance to euthanasia protocol in place, however prior to the amendment to the CAA, if a dog was surrendered as a result of an attack, and did not previously have a Dangerous or Menacing Declaration, then Council would never rehome that animal. Under these provisions of the legislation, Council is still required to lobby Rescue Agencies in an attempt to re-home an animal that is a risk to the Community. Alternatively, Council must then go down a pathway of declaration of the dog, which means that, as a minimum, a dog must be kept for at least 7 days – increasing risk to staff and costs to Council; reducing Council's capacity to house other dogs that are potentially re-homable and also increasing stress unnecessarily on the impounded dog.

Notably, the scenario above applies to a dog that has **killed** a person or other animal. There is no provision under these amendments for Council to accept a dog, an owner is willingly surrendering following a serious dog attack that has resulted in significant injury or death to other animals or a person.

This scenario is applicable to bone-a-fide feral cats that are brought into the shelter – they are not able to be handled and they are terrified of their surroundings and entrapment. These cats are a potential risk to healthy cats and staff and again their holding period unnecessarily place burdens on the Shelter with a known outcome of euthanasia.

e) Factors influencing the number of animals ending up in New South Wales pounds, and strategies for reducing these numbers

Factors Influencing	Strategies for Reducing Numbers
Current economic situation	Pursuing amendments to the Act in relation to Puppy Farming.
Impacts from the Pandemic – people took on ownership of Companion Animals that they cannot afford from a financial and time perspective post the Pandemic. Increased impoundment rates reported by Councils, Animal Welfare Organisations and RSPCA	Adoption of the NSW Government (Previous Liberal) response into the Inquiry into Puppy Farming in NSW – Final Report
<i>N.B. Council has a consistently low euthanasia rate and have no tolerance for euthanising dogs or cats that are able to be re-homed – this has been Council's practice for many years. Statistics are accurately reported to the OLG</i>	Rebate to owners to encourage desexing of their animals
	Regulate back-yard breeding – only people affiliated with a recognised organisation eg., DogsNSW be permitted to breed their companion animals.
	Increased penalties for not complying with the registration requirements of the CAA.
	Audit by OLG or DPI of animal shelters to investigate euthanasia rates and practices in NSW pounds, including the adequacy of reporting of euthanasia rates and other statistics.

f) The role and challenges of behavioural assessments in New South Wales pounds

- *Inconsistency across the state. No established criteria that Councils use to determine the viability and suitability of a companion animal to be re-homed;*
- *Training of staff is expensive WSC Ranger and Animal Management Officers receive annual training at WSC, however there is no financial support to do so.*
- *No independent body to determine whether a dog is a restricted breed. The person undertaking an assessment on breed is then able to determine the temperament of that dog. This should be separately assessed by independent persons/organisations.*

g) The relationship between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations

Animal Rescue Organisations and RSPCA are at breaking point. In previous years we had co-operation particularly with the Animal Rescue Organisations. This is currently not the case as they have no capacity to assist. It is not a case of will not – they cannot.

h) The challenges associated with the number of homeless cats living in New South Wales for both pounds and animal rescue organisations, and strategies for address this issue

- *Cats that are friendly and healthy are still very difficult to re-home*
- *Cats under current CAA legislation are permitted to roam – controls legislated by other States has had a positive effect, not only on the reduction of kill to wildlife but to the number of unwanted litters often resulting in feral cat population.*
- *Incentives for Council and changes to legislation to enable targeting of known feral cat colonies.*
- *Government subsidies to de-sex a cat*

i) Strategies for improving the treatment, care and outcomes for animal in New South Wales pounds

- *Regular socialising of Companion Animals*
- *Mental stimulation*
- *Spot auditing of animal shelters by OLG or DPI*
- *Improved de-sexing programs including financial support*
- *Independent review of companion animals that are not able to be re-homed but are still impounded*
- *Clear and achievable specifications of infrastructure provided eg., runs to number of kennels, size of kennels, weather protection etc.*

j) Any other related matter.

Nil