

**Submission
No 47**

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Hunter Animal Watch Inc.

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Inquiry into Pounds in New South Wales

Submitted by Hunter Animal Watch Inc.
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This submission is written from the point of view of Hunter Animal Watch, which came into existence in the late 90's. Our aim was to operate a subsidised companion animal desexing program, and our target group was pet owners who were pensioners and health card holders. In this way we hoped to keep unwanted animals out of pounds. Our clients come from five LGAs in the Lower Hunter - Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Port Stephens and Cessnock. We maintain good relations with other animal organisations and Councils.

Hunter Animal Watch has helped approximately forty thousand owners to desex their animals. We have a number of vet clinics which undertake the surgeries for us. Our work is ongoing. Our funding comes from our charity shop staffed by volunteers, in Hamilton, Newcastle. No-one who works with Hunter Animal Watch, committee or volunteers, is paid.

In 1998 the Companion Animals Act was brought in by the NSW Government "to provide for the identification and registration of companion animals and the duties of their owners, and for other purposes." It required compulsory identification and registration of companion animals.

We were very pleased to see the Act, as we believed the provisions would result in a greater level of responsible ownership. However, our experience over the past 25 years is that an Act which is not supported by sufficient resources to ensure compliance and deliver education cannot be successful. If it were, we would not see over-crowded pounds full of animals for which no homes can be found, despite the work of animal rescue groups.

We had expected that the Animal Welfare Fund established by the Act would have been used in part to advertise and promote the benefits of desexing companion animals. This did not eventuate.

As far as pounds are concerned, far too many are old, and totally inadequate to provide a decent environment for animals. Some pounds are remote and

difficult for people to access. Population has increased, and with it, pet ownership, and more unwanted animals due to human irresponsibility. **If New South Wales is to provide acceptable accommodation for animals, increased financial resources need to be applied. As things are at present, community expectations are not being met.**

Statistics for pounds, including euthanasia, do not appear to be kept up to date. Nevertheless, stats available show the large numbers of healthy dogs and cats euthanized.

Are “approved temperament assessors” available to every pound? What is the professional training provided to assessors? How much time can be spent on individual dogs? If sufficient time is not possible, many of these dogs, traumatised as they are bound to be in pounds, are put down.

Favourable registration fees for desexed animals provided for in the Act, should encourage owners to desex. And of course, there are many responsible owners, but far too many who are not. **The lack of enforcement and lack of ongoing information about the benefits of desexing and responsible ownership generally, renders the Act far less effective than it could be.**

Requirements for registration and identification are confusing to some people, especially if ownership of an animal needs to be transferred to a new owner, either given away or sold. And even more so if animals move inter-state.

Cats are far more numerous than dogs, and to a desexing group like Hunter Animal Watch, it is very dispiriting to be asked to desex female cats who have “just had a litter”. Such requests to us are far too common.

Private rentals and homeowners tend to restrict the number of animals on premises, but this is not so in public housing where cats are numerous. The Government might consider a requirement that companion animals in public housing must be desexed.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our experience and suggestions.

On behalf of
Hunter Animal Watch Inc.
c/o Olga Parkes, Hon. Sec.