

**Submission
No 58**

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Animal Services Australasia

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INQUIRY
INTO
POUNDS
IN
**NEW SOUTH
WALES**

NSW GOVERNMENT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 8
CUSTOMER SERVICE

ANIMAL SERVICES AUSTRALASIA
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INQUIRY INTO INTO AND REPORT ON POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission delves into the multifaceted challenges encountered by animal pounds in New South Wales, encompassing funding inadequacies, outdated facilities, welfare disparities, regulatory gaps, strategies for curbing animal numbers, euthanasia concerns, behavioral assessments, relationships with rescue entities, and the issue of stray cats. This submission underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance animal welfare, encompassing resourcing enhancements, facility modernisation, standardised welfare protocols, regulatory reinforcement, collaborative initiatives with rescue organizations, and strategic measures to address the issue of homeless cats. By addressing these challenges collectively, New South Wales can pave the way for an improved and more ethical approach to animal care, resulting in enhanced outcomes and a more compassionate system for animals within pounds.



4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- I. RESOURCING CHALLENGES AFFECTING NEW SOUTH WALES POUNDS, INCLUDING THE ADEQUACY OF FUNDING GIVEN TOWARDS THE OPERATION OF POUNDS BY LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS.
- II. THE ADEQUACY OF POUND BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES
- III. WELFARE CHALLENGES FACING ANIMALS IN POUNDS ACROSS NEW SOUTH WALES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF HOUSING, BEDDING, FEEDING, EXERCISE, ENRICHMENT, VETERINARY TREATMENT, VACCINATION AND DESEXING.
- IV. 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
- V. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS ENDING UP IN NEW SOUTH WALES POUNDS, AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING THESE NUMBERS.
- VI. EUTHANASIA RATES AND PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES POUNDS, INCLUDING THE ADEQUACY OF REPORTING OF EUTHANASIA RATES AND OTHER STATISTICS.
- VII. THE ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF BEHAVIOURAL ASSESSMENTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES POUNDS
- VIII. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEW SOUTH WALES POUNDS AND ANIMAL RESCUE ORGANISATIONS
- IX. THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS CATS LIVING IN NEW SOUTH WALES FOR BOTH POUNDS AND ANIMAL RESCUE ORGANISATIONS, AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE.
- X. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE TREATMENT, CARE AND OUTCOMES FOR ANIMALS IN NEW SOUTH WALES POUNDS.



5. ANIMAL SERVICES AUSTRALASIA

Animal Services Australasia is a collective of industry subject matter experts working to represent the diverse needs of animals and their human counterparts in an array of ever-changing environments.

Guided by compassion, respect, integrity, collaboration, education, advocacy, lifelong care, humane practices, conservation, and continuous improvement, Animal Service Australasia's vision is a world where all animals are treated with respect, kindness, and compassion.

Our goal is to eliminate animal cruelty and neglect, and to ensure that all animals are provided with the care and attention they need to thrive. We envision a world where animals are no longer subjected to inhumane practices, and where their natural habitats are preserved for future generations.

6. INTRODUCTION

The Centre for International Economics www.TheCIE.com.au was commissioned by the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) in 2022, to investigate and review rehoming practices in NSW. Animal Services Australasia was one of many stakeholders who provided input into this review participating in workshops and discussions, written submissions, and provision of information.

The information referenced, and comments provided by Animal Services Australasia in this inquiry submission document, draw from the CIE-Draft-Report, NSW Office of Local Government, Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW, September 2022.



7. RESOURCING CHALLENGES FOR POUNDS

Referring to the CIE report, the key resourcing challenges affecting New South Wales pounds include inadequate funding from local and state governments, limited resources to cover pound expenses, outdated and inadequate infrastructure, staffing shortages, and the prioritisation of funding for companion animal management. These challenges impact the ability of pounds to adequately care for animals, manage intake, and provide effective rehoming programs.

- **Issues with funding for pound operations by local and state governments.**
- **Impound facilities lack proper resources, especially trained staff.**
- **Many regional councils have multifaceted responsibilities, leading to inconsistent care for animals.**

8. INADEQUATE POUND BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

The adequacy of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales is a significant concern. Many pounds are described as old, small, poorly equipped, and in varying conditions. The lack of adequate facilities can hinder the effective management of animals and impact rehoming programs. The resourcing challenges, including limited funding and staff, further exacerbate the issue of inadequate pound facilities. There is an urgent need for improved infrastructure to ensure better care and accommodation for the increasing number of animals entering pounds. Recommendations have been made to address funding and facilities challenges, indicating that the current state of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales requires attention and improvement.

- **Most pound buildings are old and were built for smaller requirements.**
- **A few standout facilities exist, but overall, buildings and facilities are not up to standard.**



9. WELFARE CHALLENGES FOR ANIMALS IN POUNDS

It is evident that there are several welfare challenges facing animals in pounds across New South Wales. The provision of adequate housing, bedding, feeding, exercise, enrichment, veterinary treatment, vaccination, and desexing is essential for ensuring the welfare of animals in pounds. However, resourcing challenges, including limited funding and facilities, can impact the ability to meet these welfare needs. Inadequate facilities, overcrowding, and lack of proper amenities can negatively affect animal welfare. The condition and welfare of animals in pounds can also impact rehoming outcomes and adoption rates. Recommendations have been made to address these challenges, emphasizing the importance of proper housing, veterinary care, and enrichment to improve animal welfare in pounds.

- **Animals face issues with housing, feeding, exercise, and veterinary care.**
- **Lack of standardised welfare guidelines across local government authorities.**
- **Shortage of vets and skilled workers worsens these challenges, particularly in regional areas.**

10. LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING POUNDS

The legal framework, including the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5, sets the standards for the management of pounds and the welfare of animals. However, challenges may exist in the enforcement and compliance regime due to limited resources and capacity. Adequate facilities and infrastructure are crucial for compliance with the regulations and codes governing animal welfare. Compliance monitoring is essential to assess whether pounds are meeting the legal requirements and standards, but challenges may arise due to limited resources and reporting. Recommendations have been proposed in the report to address some of these issues, such as establishing an ongoing funding arrangement for a community cat program to enhance enforcement and compliance with cat management regulations. Overall, the adequacy of the laws, regulations, and codes governing New South Wales pounds requires ongoing monitoring and improvements to ensure the welfare of animals in pounds.

- **Focus on resourcing and capacity-building for enforcing existing laws.**
- **Involve various agencies like Department of Primary Industries for regulation.**
- **Inadequate compliance in impound and boarding facilities due to resource limitations.**



11. REDUCING ANIMAL NUMBERS IN POUNDS

Factors influencing the number of animals ending up in New South Wales pounds include stray or roaming animals, surrendered pets, uncontrolled breeding, inadequate facilities, and a lack of resources. Strategies for reducing these numbers include effective rehoming programs, enforcement of registration and identification requirements, stray animal management, pet owner education and support services, desexing and control programs, and ongoing funding for community cat programs. Overall, a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is needed to address the root causes of animal intake in pounds and to implement effective strategies for reducing the number of animals ending up in New South Wales pounds.

- **Mandatory microchipping, licensing for breeding, and subsidies for desexing.**
- **Creating a network of impound facilities and working with rescue organizations to rehome animals.**

12. EUTHANASIA RATES IN POUNDS

Euthanasia rates in New South Wales pounds vary based on the health and behaviour issues of animals, as well as space limitations and available resources. Adequate reporting of euthanasia rates and other statistics is crucial for understanding the reasons for euthanasia and identifying areas for improvement in the management of companion animals in pounds. The CIE report suggests splitting the reasons for euthanasia into more specific categories to provide more accurate data and highlights the importance of reporting animal complaints and rehoming outcomes to track and assess the impact of different policies and strategies. Additionally, the cost of companion animal management, including euthanasia expenses, plays a role in shaping the overall approach to handling animals in pounds.

- **Concerns about euthanasia rates, particularly for cats.**
- **Mandatory microchipping, better population management, and humane strategies needed.**



13. BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS IN POUNDS

Behavioural assessments are critical in determining an animal's temperament and suitability for rehoming. These assessments help in identifying potential issues with aggression or unsuitability for certain living conditions, thus guiding decisions on adoption or rehoming. However, conducting behavioural assessments requires trained staff and resources, which can be a challenge for some pounds. The CIE report emphasizes the need for trained staff to undertake these assessments and suggests supporting behaviour assessment training programs to ensure better outcomes for companion animals in pounds. Overall, behavioural assessments play a vital role in the management and welfare of animals in New South Wales pounds.

- **Behavioral assessments are important for determining an animal's temperament and needs.**
- **Challenges include remote testing and under-resourced assessors.**
- **Need for standardized assessment methods and collaboration among local authorities.**

14. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POUNDS AND RESCUE ORGANISATIONS

The relationship between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations involves collaboration and cooperation. The CIE report suggests that councils should work with rehoming organisations and encourages them to form partnerships with established bodies like the RSPCA. Administrative arrangements are being adjusted to facilitate easier communication and collaboration between pounds and approved rehoming organizations. Additionally, pet shop policies in NSW and QLD encourage pet shops to have relationships with rehoming organisations, reinforcing the collaborative efforts in finding homes for animals in need. The focus is on reducing euthanasia rates and increasing adoption rates through partnerships and funding arrangements.

- **Legislation requiring collaboration between impound facilities and rescue groups.**
- **Establish a balanced relationship involving impound facilities, rescues, and the pet industry.**



15. CHALLENGES OF HOMELESS CATS

The challenges associated with the number of homeless cats living in New South Wales can be addressed through targeted programs, collaborations between councils and animal rescue organisations, and implementing strategies such as mandatory desexing for rehomed animals and revising the identification and registration system to incentivise responsible pet ownership and reduce the number of stray and unowned cats. The proposed community cat program, run in partnership with experienced bodies like the RSPCA, aims to tackle the issue of homeless cats and improve their welfare and adoption prospects.

- **Concerns about large numbers of unidentified cats.**
- **Emphasis on mandatory microchipping, amending laws, and responsible ownership.**
- **Proposed pilot programs and oversight for cat colony management.**

16. IMPROVING POUND ANIMAL CARE

These strategies are aimed at enhancing the overall welfare of animals in pounds by addressing issues such as funding, proper identification, and registration, reducing euthanasia rates, improving rehoming outcomes, and promoting collaboration between stakeholders. They emphasize a more humane and responsible approach to animal management and aim to create a positive impact on the treatment and care of animals in New South Wales pounds.

- **Better training for staff, improved facilities, and veterinary services.**
- **Calls for a centralized training system and collaboration with rehoming organizations.**
- **Transport solutions for adopting animals and better public awareness of adoptable animals.**

Recommendations from the CIE-Draft-Report, NSW Office of Local Government, Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW, September 2022.

- I. "The NSW Government to establish an ongoing funding arrangement for a community cat program which councils can apply to and could be run in partnership with the RSPCA or a similar experienced body. This would be targeted to councils with the highest cat intakes."



- II. "Councils would need to show that they can target the areas with the highest problems and to report on outcomes."
- III. "The expected cost of a program that would reduce cat euthanasia by one third is \$2 million per year on average, initially run over a five-year period."
- IV. "Councils would benefit financially from this through reduced pound intakes. However, rather than seeking co-funding from councils, this cost saving would allow councils to redirect resources into increasing adoption rates for remaining animals."
- V. "For annual information reporting to OLG, the NSW Government make revisions such as splitting the reason for euthanasia currently classified as 'feral/infant' into 'feral' and 'infant,' and reporting euthanised cats and dogs into a future Companion Animal Register (CAR) if they are not already identified."
- VI. "Administrative arrangements for rehoming organizations be adjusted to allow approved rehoming organizations limited access to the CAR to minimize administrative requirements for rehoming organizations and councils."
- VII. "Behaviour assessment arrangements be revised so that councils are able to undertake assessments of whether an animal is suitable for rehoming before advertising to rehoming organisations."
- VIII. "Training programs for behavior assessment for council staff are supported by NSW OLG, which could include financial support and coordination."
- IX. "The identification and registration system be revised to remove the annual permit fee for non-desexed cats, waive registration fees for cats through Community Cat programs, and waive registration fees for animals returned to owners from pounds, where this is needed as an incentive for return to owner."
- X. "The NSW Government provide a definition for types of cats, with a model definition."



- XI. "Registration payments would be equal and include a voucher for desexing that goes with this fee, valid for a year. This allows for the desexing incentive to be retained, and identification and registration payment to be combined."
- XII. "Make registration (i.e., payment) for an animal occur at the same time as identification."
- XIII. "Make it mandatory for animals rehomed or sold through council pounds or rehoming organizations to be desexed, unless there is a cruelty or health reason not to."
- XIV. "OLG should send messages to all dog and cat owners via text (or email) to remind them to update any relevant information on the CAR."
- XV. "Revised standards for pound facilities to ensure animal welfare standards should be developed."
- XVI. "For annual information reporting to OLG, the NSW Government make revisions to the reason for euthanasia, approved rehoming organizations reporting, and consideration be given to reporting of animal complaints."

13. CONCLUSION

In summary, this document highlights issues such as resourcing challenges, inadequate facilities, welfare concerns, legal framework shortcomings, strategies to reduce animal numbers, euthanasia rates, behavioural assessments, collaboration between pounds and rescues, challenges with homeless cats, and strategies for enhancing animal care in New South Wales pounds. Many of the challenges mentioned are related to insufficient funding and resources, and this document outlines various strategies to address these issues and improve the overall treatment and outcomes of animals in pounds.

14. REFERENCES

https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CIE-Draft-Report_NSW-OLG_Rehoming-of-Companion-Animals-in-NSW.pdf

https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CIE-Issues-Paper_NSW-OLG_Rehoming-of-Companion-Animals-in-NSW-25052022-final.pdf