

**Submission
No 64**

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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The level of cruelty is appalling. The staff needs to be reviewed and at the very least management removed.

The NSW Government is failing vulnerable impounded animals and NSW communities. Not only are NSW pounds and shelters killing thousands of impounded animals, but the level of non-compliance in many impounding facilities and management practices is also contributing to extensive animal suffering and misery. Our inadequate and antiquated animal welfare laws are not protecting these vulnerable impounded animals.

Being killed in a pound or shelter is still the leading cause of death for companion animals in NSW. What's more, if they're old, young, unweaned, unwell, suffer a disability, or even timid, their chances of being killed increase substantially with most not making it out alive.

Despite the availability of many evidence-based and life-saving programs designed to stop the killing and suffering, our NSW pound and shelter system continues to actively support and enable the killing of impounded animals with little or no public transparency and accountability.

Pounds and shelters are like every other publicly funded community service. We don't excuse a poorly performing hospital or homeless refuge by saying people shouldn't get sick or become homeless. Neither should we justify the appalling poor performance of NSW's pounds and shelters by saying pets shouldn't end up there, and it's the community's fault.

Initiatives the Committee could include as recommendations in the Inquiry report:

Introduce a fully funded, mandatory and legally enforceable NSW pound and shelter 'duty of care' regime which focuses on proactive life-saving initiatives and solutions, and best practice animal welfare outcomes, rather than killing and disposal;

End the currently unacceptable treatment and neglect of homeless and vulnerable impounded animals under NSW's traditional animal pound and shelter model, which manages animals under 'waste management' or 'feral pest management' policies, focusing on disposal rather than care, rehoming and adoption;

Immediately halt all NSW pound and shelter shooting and discontinue all 'euthanasia' methods apart from intravenous injection for compassionate reasons;

Immediately end all pound and shelter 'euthanasia' procedures being undertaken by anyone apart from qualified and licensed veterinary practitioners;

Urgently conduct a public online survey (~8 weeks) to engage the community and harness a broad range of views and expectations about the management of NSW pounds and shelters;

Publicly exhibit (for ~4 weeks) a tailored, stand-alone Code of Practice for all impounded animals in NSW pounds and shelters;

Carry out comprehensive and independent audits of:

all NSW impounding facilities to identify the level of compliance/non-compliance and
all NSW impounding practices, procedures, policies, and;
actual 'no kill' performance.

Introduce mandatory Local Government Council Strategic Companion Animal Management Plans ('SCAMPs') with attached policies and KPI's to enable ongoing 4 yearly 'local' public consultation periods, reviews and improvements in line with evolving public expectations.

Enact a 'No Kill' Bill or sweeping changes to POCTAA to include all impounded animals (of all species) and outlaw the killing of otherwise healthy homeless animals. These reforms must incorporate the full suite of No Kill programs and principles as mandatory, which, when combined, form a highly effective life-saving plan;

Substantially overhaul the Companion Animals Act to include a revised focus on all impounded animals, regardless of species;

Establish a new OLG NSW Pound and Shelter Reform website, including an online complaint form and 1800 'hotline' tailored specifically for public pound and shelter complaints and concerns;

Enhance inspection and enforcement powers for agencies authorised under POCTAA to undertake routine NSW pound and shelter inspections and enforcement.

Conduct a comprehensive review and overhaul of the NSW Companion Animals Fund, including an assessment of evidenced outcomes and how it is distributed and managed'

Introduce an annual grants program for NSW not-for-profits, including self-funded and volunteer rescue, rehoming and advocacy organisations;

Introduce NSW pound and shelter initiatives to support vulnerable or at-risk animal owners or caregivers during periods of intense need, in order to keep animals in homes and ensure the welfare and wellbeing of both humans and animals. This should include those experiencing:

Financial stress, homelessness or are at risk of homelessness;

Domestic violence;

Emergency management incidents (e.g., bushfires and floods) and;

Physical or mental health issues, including hospital stays or other medical needs.