

**Submission
No 66**

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Council Unites for Pets Reference Group

Date Received: 18 August 2023

18/8/2023

The Hon. Emma Hurst MLC
Chairperson
NSW Parliamentary Inquiry in Pounds
Portfolio Committee No. 8 Customer Service

Dear Chairperson,

Subject: Response to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry in Pounds in NSW

On behalf of the Council Unites for Pets Group (CUPS), we extend our appreciation for the opportunity to offer our input on the key aspects of the Terms of Reference of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry in Pounds.

The CUPS Reference Group is a prominent local government industry group that was established in 1997 with the aim of fostering connections and advancing the expertise, knowledge, and professionalism of local government animal management staff. Our members are local government employees and more recently associated welfare organisation representatives that are devoted to the welfare of our community's animals. As a whole we acknowledge the significance of this inquiry and its potential to enhance animal welfare standards across the state.

The CUPS Reference Group is acknowledged by animal welfare organisations and government entities in NSW as a crucial working group whose members hold substantial industry insight in the realm of Local Government animal management. We warmly embrace this occasion to contribute our perspectives to the Portfolio Committee's Inquiry into Pounds in NSW.

(a) Resource Challenges Impacting New South Wales Pounds:

We are grateful for the chance to address the resource-related challenges that significantly impact pounds in New South Wales. Particularly noteworthy is the insufficiency of financial support provided by both local and state governments for pound operations. As a conscientious collective of local government stakeholders, our dedication to animal welfare drives our concern regarding the repercussions of inadequate funding on the well-being of animals under our care and our devoted staff's occupational health and safety.

The demand for pound services, encompassing sheltering, sustenance, veterinary care, and rehoming, continues to rise. Nonetheless, the available funding for pound operations frequently falls short of the necessary resources to adequately cater to the needs of abandoned or stray animals. The implications of insufficient funding have far-reaching effects, affecting not only the animals but also the quality of services rendered and the well-being of pound staff in terms of their work health and safety.

The constraint on resources due to inadequate funding hampers the capacity of Local Government to provide the level of care imperative for the welfare of animals under our guardianship. Suitable shelter, appropriate nourishment, access to veterinary care, and activities that enrich their lives are indispensable for their physical and psychological health. The absence of sufficient State Government funding places us in a predicament where fulfilling these fundamental necessities becomes a challenge, leading to compromised animal welfare, especially in smaller and regional council zones within the state.

Insufficient funding for pound operations not only has implications for animal welfare but also exerts pressure on the broader community. Local Government pounds often collaborate with other community initiatives, and limited resources can impede effective cooperation. Furthermore, inadequate funding diverts attention and resources away from other essential community undertakings.

Adequate funding is not only pivotal for the welfare of animals but also for the occupational health and safety of the dedicated staff employed within the pound sector. Inadequate funding results in a scarcity of vital resources and training essential for upholding a secure work environment for pound staff. It is crucial that we prioritise the well-being and safety of these employees, whose role is instrumental in caring for the animals within our community.

Given the challenges presented by constraints in resourcing and funding, we urge the NSW Government to explore avenues to augment funding allocations for locally administered pounds.

Sufficient funding is indispensable to sustain the crucial functions of pounds, guaranteeing the welfare of animals in our care and the work health and safety of our staff. Specifically, we call upon the government to contemplate the following measures:

1. Allocate supplementary funding to local councils that is explicitly designated for pound operations, while taking into consideration the escalating demand for services and the resources required to uphold elevated standards of animal welfare.
2. Collaborate with local governments to identify and tackle the distinct resourcing challenges that individual pounds across New South Wales face, thereby tailoring solutions to meet their distinctive requirements.
3. Acknowledge the significance of animal welfare and the pivotal role that pounds play in safeguarding the welfare of animals within our communities. Elevate funding for pound operations as a priority to facilitate the allocation of resources.
4. Allocate funds for comprehensive training and development initiatives designed for pound staff to enhance their competencies, knowledge, and practices pertaining to work health and safety.

In conclusion, we underscore the urgency of addressing the resource-related challenges confronted by pounds in New South Wales, particularly concerning funding. Sufficient funding is indispensable to provide excellent care for animals within our care and to ensure the well-being of our dedicated pound staff. The need for such funding is immediate. Through investments in pound operations, the NSW State Government can actively support our dedication to animal welfare and endorse the crucial endeavours of these facilities within our communities.

(b) Adequacy of Pound Buildings and Facilities in New South Wales:

The current state of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales is an area of significant concern particularly in the regional and rural areas. Many pounds face challenges arising from outdated infrastructure and limited space, leading to overcrowding and adverse effects on the well-being of animals in our care. The lack of sufficient space, appropriate housing, and modern amenities can hinder our ability to provide the level of care and comfort that these animals deserve.

Overcrowded and outdated pound facilities contribute to increased stress levels among animals, making them susceptible to various health and behavioural issues. The lack of space may lead to

poor sanitation, limited exercise opportunities, and inadequate socialisation, further compromising their overall welfare. As animal welfare advocates, it is our moral duty to ensure that these animals are provided with a safe and comfortable environment during their time in pounds.

We strongly advocate for increased investment by the NSW Government in the funding and delivery of regional-based Animal Rehoming Facilities that incorporate enhanced pound infrastructure. Such a facility would serve as a central hub in these regions where animals from multiple pounds in the region can be appropriately housed, cared for, and rehomed. The key features of this proposed facility should include:

1. Incorporate state-of-the-art design principles that prioritise animal welfare, including spacious and comfortable housing areas, sufficient exercise yards, and enrichment spaces.
2. Equipped with on-site veterinary clinics or close access to veterinary services to ensure prompt and comprehensive medical care for animals in need.
3. Ample capacity to accommodate animals from various pounds in the region, fostering collaboration between local councils and promoting efficient resource utilisation.
4. Dedicated spaces for behavioural assessments and enrichment programs that address the individual needs of animals and prepare them for successful adoptions.
5. Establish adoption centres within the facility to facilitate the adoption process and find suitable forever homes for the animals.

The establishment of regional-based Animal Rehoming Facilities in New South Wales would offer several benefits, including:

- a. Providing modern, spacious, and well-equipped facilities, we can ensure the animals' overall well-being and promote their physical and mental health.
- b. Collaboration among multiple Councils in the region allows for better resource management and cost-effectiveness.
- c. A central facility with ample space and resources will increase the visibility of animals available for adoption, potentially leading to higher adoption rates.
- d. A facility that was the focal point for community engagement, education, and awareness initiatives regarding responsible pet ownership and animal welfare.

In conclusion, the adequacy of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales requires urgent attention and action. We urge the NSW Government to prioritise investment in regional-based Animal Rehoming Facilities with enhanced pound infrastructure to ensure a safe, comfortable, and nurturing environment for the animals in our care. By working together and making strategic investments, we can uphold our responsibility to protect and promote the welfare of animals throughout the state.

(c) Welfare Challenges Facing Animals in Pounds Across New South Wales:

Animal care and welfare are at the forefront of our priorities, and we acknowledge that challenges exist in providing adequate housing, bedding, feeding, exercise, enrichment, veterinary treatment, vaccination, and desexing for animals in pounds.

At Council Unite for Pets Group (CUPS), animal care and welfare are of utmost importance to our members. However, we recognise that challenges exist due to several factors:

1. The demand for pound services continues to grow, leading to a strain on available resources. Limited funding opportunities for Local Government hampers our ability to provide the necessary care and services for the animals in our care.
2. Providing high-quality care for animals requires a dedicated and skilled workforce. A lack of sufficient qualified staff can impact our ability to meet the diverse needs of the animals, resulting in compromised animal welfare.
3. Outdated infrastructure and limited space can lead to overcrowding within pounds. This can adversely affect the animals' well-being, making it challenging to provide adequate exercise, enrichment, and personalised attention.
4. Access to prompt and comprehensive veterinary care is vital for maintaining the health of animals in pounds. The current shortage of qualified vets to undertake vital contract services is significantly hindering the ability to provide adequate, timely care and services. Similarly, this is affecting desexing programs which are essential to curb overpopulation and reduce the number of animals ending up in pounds.

We wholeheartedly support the Office of Local Government in its implementation of comprehensive animal welfare standards and guidelines. Consistent and high-quality care for animals in Council Pounds is a shared goal that we strive to achieve. These standards and guidelines serve as essential frameworks for ensuring the well-being and proper treatment of animals in our care and should be made available to Local Government as a priority.

Recommendations:

To address the challenges facing animal care and welfare in Council pounds, we recommend the following:

1. Prioritised funding opportunities for Local Government to enhance the resources available for animal care and welfare in pounds. Adequate funding is critical for maintaining the highest standards of care for animals.
2. Invest in ongoing training and development programs for pound staff to enhance their skills and qualifications. This will contribute to the provision of better care for the diverse needs of animals in our care.
3. Allocation of funds for the modernisation and expansion of pound facilities. Upgrading infrastructure will not only enhance animal welfare but also create a safer and more comfortable environment for both animals and staff.
4. Foster collaborations with reputable non-government organisations (NGOs) and volunteers to complement the efforts of Council pounds. This collaborative approach can help address resource limitations and improve the overall care provided to animals.

In conclusion, Council Unites for Pets Group (CUPS) remains committed to improving animal care and welfare in our member council pounds. We appreciate the importance of comprehensive animal welfare standards and guidelines in ensuring consistent and high-quality care for animals. By advocating for increased funding opportunities, investing in staff training, modernising facilities, and

fostering collaborations, we aim to overcome the challenges and create a positive impact on animal welfare.

(d) Adequacy of Laws, Regulations, and Codes Governing New South Wales Pounds:

As a peak industry body committed to ensuring the highest standards of animal welfare, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) acknowledges the significance of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and Cats in animal boarding establishments (1996) in governing pounds.

The Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5, play a crucial role in providing a regulatory foundation for animal welfare standards in pounds across the state. These guidelines outline the responsibilities of local councils and other organisations operating pounds in ensuring the well-being and care of animals in their custody. They set forth essential provisions, including housing, feeding, exercise, veterinary treatment, and desexing requirements, which serve to protect the animals and ensure their welfare during their stay in pounds.

While the existing guidelines provide a solid foundation, we recognise the importance of regular reviews and updates to address emerging issues and incorporate best practices. The landscape of animal welfare and pound management is constantly evolving, and continuous improvement is necessary to ensure the most effective and compassionate care for animals. Specific guidelines tailored for Local Government pounds will help address the unique challenges and responsibilities faced by Council-run pounds.

Alongside regular reviews, an enhanced enforcement and compliance regime is essential to ensure strict adherence to the regulations governing pounds. This includes ensuring that all Council-run pounds have the necessary resources, infrastructure, and qualified staff to meet the prescribed standards. By implementing a robust enforcement mechanism, we can better safeguard the welfare of animals and maintain accountability among pound operators.

To further strengthen the regulatory framework for animal welfare in pounds, we call upon the NSW Government to consider the following actions:

1. Conduct periodic reviews of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 to incorporate emerging best practices and advancements in animal welfare standards. These reviews should include specific guidelines tailored for Local Government pounds.
2. Implement an enhanced enforcement and compliance regime to ensure strict adherence to the regulations governing pounds. This should involve regular inspections, audits, and reporting to monitor compliance and address any deficiencies promptly.
3. Support Local Government pounds with the necessary resources to meet the prescribed standards. Adequate funding and training opportunities will help Council-run pounds maintain high levels of care and welfare for animals.
4. Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders, including Local Government, NGOs, veterinary professionals, and animal welfare experts. This collaborative approach can lead to more effective regulations and improved animal welfare outcomes.

In conclusion, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) emphasises the importance of a robust regulatory framework for animal welfare in New South Wales pounds. While the existing guidelines provide a solid foundation, regular reviews, and updates, along with an enhanced enforcement and compliance regime, are essential to address emerging challenges and ensure the

best possible care for animals in pounds. We are committed to working with the NSW Government, our members and other stakeholders to strengthen these regulations and uphold the highest standards of animal welfare.

(b) Suitability of Pound Structures and Facilities in New South Wales:

The current condition of pound structures and facilities in New South Wales gives rise to notable concerns. Many pounds encounter difficulties due to outdated infrastructure and limited space, leading to overcrowding and unfavourable impacts on the well-being of animals under our care. Insufficient space, inadequate housing, and outdated amenities can impede our capacity to provide the level of care and comfort these animals rightfully deserve.

Overcrowded and antiquated pound facilities contribute to heightened stress levels among animals, rendering them susceptible to various health and behavioural challenges. Insufficient space can result in suboptimal sanitation, restricted exercise opportunities, and limited socialisation, further jeopardising their overall welfare. As advocates for animal welfare, it is our ethical duty to ensure a secure and comforting environment for these animals during their time within pounds.

We earnestly advocate for an increased commitment from the NSW Government in terms of funding and implementing a regional-based Animal Rehoming Facility that integrates improved pound infrastructure. Such a facility would serve as a central hub in the respective regions, where animals from various pounds within the region can be appropriately sheltered, cared for, and eventually rehomed. The pivotal aspects of this envisioned facility should encompass:

1. The integration of cutting-edge design principles that prioritise animal welfare, offering expansive and comfortable living spaces, ample exercise areas, and spaces for enrichment.
2. Equipped with on-site veterinary clinics or convenient access to veterinary services, guaranteeing timely and comprehensive medical care for animals in need.
3. Sufficient capacity to house animals from diverse pounds within the region, fostering collaboration among local councils and facilitating efficient resource allocation.
4. Designated areas for behavioural assessments and enrichment initiatives, tailored to address the individual needs of animals and prepare them for successful adoptions.
5. Establishment of adoption centers within the facility to streamline the adoption process and identify suitable forever homes for the animals.

The establishment of regional-based Animal Rehoming Facilities in New South Wales would yield multiple advantages, including:

- a. Provision of modern, spacious, and well-equipped facilities, ensuring the overall well-being of animals and promoting their physical and mental health.
- b. Collaboration among several councils in the region, enabling better resource management and cost-effectiveness.
- c. A centralised facility with ample space and resources, enhancing visibility of adoptable animals and potentially leading to higher adoption rates.
- d. A focal point for community engagement, education, and awareness campaigns regarding responsible pet ownership and animal welfare.

In conclusion, the adequacy of pound structures and facilities in New South Wales mandates prompt attention and action. We implore the NSW Government to prioritise investments in regional-based Animal Rehoming Facilities with upgraded pound infrastructure to ensure a secure, comfortable, and nurturing environment for animals under our care. Through collective efforts and strategic investments, we can fulfill our obligation to safeguard and uphold the welfare of animals throughout the state.

(c) Welfare Challenges Confronting Animals in Pounds Across New South Wales:

Animal well-being and care are central to our priorities, and we recognise the existence of challenges in offering adequate shelter, bedding, nutrition, exercise, enrichment, veterinary care, vaccination, and sterilisation for animals within pounds.

At the Council Unites for Pets Group (CUPS), animal well-being and care are of paramount importance to our members. Nonetheless, we acknowledge the presence of challenges due to several factors:

1. The demand for pound services is steadily increasing, placing strain on available resources. Insufficient funding opportunities for Local Government impede our ability to deliver the requisite care and services for animals in our care.
2. Delivering high-quality care demands a dedicated and skilled workforce. An absence of adequately qualified staff can impact our ability to address the diverse needs of the animals, resulting in compromised animal welfare.
3. Outmoded infrastructure and limited space can lead to overcrowding within pounds. This situation can adversely affect the animals' well-being, complicating efforts to provide ample exercise, enrichment, and personalised attention.
4. Access to prompt and comprehensive veterinary care is vital for maintaining animals' health in pounds. The present scarcity of qualified veterinarians to undertake essential contract services significantly hampers the ability to provide adequate, timely care and services. Similarly, this situation affects sterilisation programs essential for curtailing overpopulation and reducing the number of animals entering pounds.

We wholeheartedly endorse the Office of Local Government's implementation of comprehensive animal welfare standards and guidelines. Consistent and superior care for animals in Council Pounds is a shared aspiration we strive to achieve. These standards and guidelines form indispensable frameworks for ensuring the well-being and proper treatment of animals in our care and should be promptly extended to Local Government.

Recommendations:

To address the challenges in animal care and welfare in Council pounds, we propose the following measures:

1. Prioritise funding opportunities for Local Government to amplify the resources available for animal care and welfare within pounds. Sufficient funding is critical to upholding the highest standards of animal care.
2. Invest in continuous training and development initiatives for pound staff to enhance their skills and credentials. This will contribute to better care for the diverse needs of animals under our care.

3. Allocate funds for modernising and expanding pound facilities. Upgrading infrastructure will enhance animal welfare and create a safer and more comfortable environment for animals and staff alike.

4. Foster collaborations with reputable non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and volunteers to complement the endeavours of Council pounds. This collaborative approach can alleviate resource constraints and improve the overall care provided to animals.

In conclusion, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) remains steadfast in its commitment to enhancing animal care and welfare in our member council pounds. We recognise the significance of robust animal welfare standards and guidelines in ensuring consistent and superior care for animals. By advocating for increased funding, investing in staff training, modernising facilities, and fostering collaborations, we aim to overcome challenges and positively influence animal welfare.

(d) Adequacy of Regulations, Laws, and Codes Governing New South Wales Pounds:

As a peak industry association dedicated to upholding the utmost standards of animal welfare, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) acknowledges the significance of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and Cats in Animal Boarding Establishments (1996) in governing pounds.

The Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 play a pivotal role in providing a regulatory framework for animal welfare standards in pounds across the state. These guidelines delineate the responsibilities of local councils and other entities operating pounds, ensuring the well-being and care of animals in their custody. They stipulate essential provisions, including housing, feeding, exercise, veterinary care, and sterilisation requirements, which safeguard animals and ensure their welfare while in pounds.

While the existing guidelines offer a strong foundation, we acknowledge the importance of periodic reviews and updates to address emerging issues and incorporate best practices. The landscape of animal welfare and pound management is ever-evolving, necessitating ongoing improvement to guarantee the most effective and compassionate care for animals. Tailored guidelines specific to Local Government pounds will help address the unique challenges and obligations encountered by Council-operated pounds.

Simultaneous with regular reviews, a fortified enforcement and compliance system is crucial to ensure rigorous adherence to regulations governing pounds. This involves guaranteeing that all Council-operated pounds possess the requisite resources, infrastructure, and qualified personnel to meet the prescribed standards. By establishing a robust enforcement mechanism, we can better safeguard animal welfare and maintain accountability among pound operators.

(e) Factors Influencing the Influx of Animals into New South Wales Pounds:

The number of animals entering pounds is influenced by a range of complex factors, including instances of irresponsible pet ownership, a lack of awareness surrounding responsible pet care, and insufficient utilisation of desexing practices. Initiatives aimed at education and community outreach hold significant potential in addressing these issues and mitigating the flow of animals into pounds.

Efforts geared toward educating the public and fostering community engagement play a pivotal role in cultivating a better understanding of responsible pet ownership and advocating for the importance of adequate desexing practices. By influencing the behaviour of pet owners, these

initiatives can inspire responsible pet care, thus leading to a reduction in the number of animals entering pounds. These undertakings also instill a sense of shared responsibility for animal welfare, fostering a more compassionate and informed society.

Nonetheless, it's essential to address the financial implications of these initiatives for local governments and communities. Organising and executing education campaigns and community outreach programs entail significant costs, including those associated with advertising, educational materials, public events, and personnel. Furthermore, the transition to lifetime pet registration in NSW has resulted in a decline in registration revenue, which traditionally supported various animal-related endeavours, including education campaigns and community outreach initiatives.

Recommendations:

Given the vital role that education campaigns and community outreach initiatives play in curbing the entry of animals into pounds, we recommend the following steps:

1. Allocate specific funding from the state budget to sustain ongoing education campaigns and community outreach efforts focused on responsible pet ownership and desexing. This financial support would enable local governments and animal welfare organisations to execute effective initiatives without relying solely on registration revenue.
2. Foster collaborations with respected non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and animal welfare groups to pool resources and share the costs of education campaigns and outreach endeavours. Cooperative endeavours can extend the reach of these initiatives and effect a more substantial impact state-wide.
3. Encourage private businesses, philanthropists, and animal enthusiasts to contribute through sponsorships and donations to support educational programs and outreach activities. Establishing public-private partnerships can considerably augment the available resources for animal welfare initiatives.
4. Institute incentives for responsible pet owners, such as reduced registration fees for desexed pets or access to discounted veterinary services. These incentives can encourage more pet owners to prioritise responsible pet care and desexing practices.
5. Develop a comprehensive tracking and evaluation system to gauge the effectiveness of education campaigns and outreach initiatives. By comprehending the impact of these efforts, we can fine-tune strategies and optimise resource allocation for future programs.

Implementing these recommendations will help surmount the financial challenges associated with education campaigns and community outreach initiatives. By securing sustainable funding and cultivating partnerships, we can persistently advance responsible pet ownership and diminish the number of animals entering pounds in New South Wales.

(f) Euthanasia Rates and Practices in New South Wales Pounds:

As a leading industry representative group committed to animal welfare, we are dedicated to minimising euthanasia rates and ensuring optimal outcomes for the animals we serve.

At the Council Unites for Pets Group (CUPS), we understand the gravity of euthanasia and its implications for both animals and our community. Our efforts are focused on minimising euthanasia rates and improving animal welfare. Strategies in this endeavour encompass:

1. Prioritising adoption as the primary avenue for placing animals into permanent and loving homes. Through comprehensive adoption programs and promotional activities, we strive to increase successful adoptions and diminish the need for euthanasia.

2. Collaborating actively with reputable animal rescue organisations to broaden rehoming opportunities for animals. These partnerships augment the reach and resources available for finding suitable homes for shelter animals.

3. Educating the community about responsible pet ownership to reduce the number of animals entering pounds. We advocate for pet desexing, proper identification, and responsible care to prevent unplanned litters and pet relinquishments.

Transparent reporting of euthanasia rates and related statistics is vital for monitoring our progress and pinpointing areas for enhancement. Open communication with the community and stakeholders regarding euthanasia practices is essential. Transparent data-sharing fosters trust, accountability, and collective commitment to animal welfare.

We recognise that minimising euthanasia rates is an ongoing endeavour, and we remain dedicated to continual improvement in our practices. This involves regular evaluation of strategies, identifying challenges, and seeking innovative solutions to further reduce euthanasia rates and enhance the overall welfare of animals under our care.

In alignment with our pledge to minimise euthanasia rates and enhance animal welfare, we urge the NSW Government to consider the following measures:

1. Allocate additional funding opportunities for local councils to invest in comprehensive adoption and rehoming programs. This support will facilitate the successful placement of animals in permanent homes.

2. Dedicate resources to support community education initiatives that emphasise responsible pet ownership and the significance of adopting animals from pounds and rescue organisations.

3. Encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange among local councils, animal rescue organisations, and animal welfare experts to formulate effective strategies for diminishing euthanasia rates.

In conclusion, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) is steadfast in its dedication to heightening awareness among our members about the value of minimising euthanasia rates through increased adoption endeavours, cooperation with animal rescue organisations, and advocacy for responsible pet ownership. Transparent reporting of euthanasia rates and associated data is crucial to gauge progress and enhance our practices continually. We are committed to collaborative efforts with the NSW Government and other stakeholders to achieve the most favourable outcomes for the animals within our care.

(g) Role and Challenges of Behavioural Assessments in New South Wales Pounds:

As a leading industry group devoted to animal welfare, we recognise the vital role of behavioural assessments and the challenges associated with conducting thorough evaluations.

Behavioural assessments are a fundamental aspect of ensuring successful adoptions and the long-term well-being of animals. These assessments provide valuable insights into an animal's temperament, behaviour, and compatibility with potential adopters, enabling informed decisions about their suitability for adoption into loving homes. By understanding an animal's unique traits

and needs, we can make better matches with families that can provide a nurturing and suitable environment, reducing the risk of adoptions being returned.

However, conducting comprehensive behavioural assessments presents challenges:

1. Adequate resources, including staff, time, and funding, are required to perform thorough behavioural evaluations for each animal. The demand for pound services and the number of animals in our care can sometimes strain available resources.
2. Conducting accurate behavioural assessments necessitates specialised knowledge and expertise. Not all pound staff may have received formal training in animal behaviour, potentially affecting the quality and consistency of assessments.
3. Animals in pounds often come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, influencing their behaviour during assessments. Customising evaluations to suit each animal's unique circumstances and history is essential for accurate results.

To address these challenges, we advocate for increased support and training for pound staff in conducting thorough evaluations. This includes:

1. Allocating funding and resources for comprehensive training programs in animal behaviour and assessment techniques. Regular training sessions can empower pound staff with the skills needed to conduct accurate evaluations.
2. Encouraging collaborations with animal behaviour experts and professionals who can provide guidance, mentorship, and assistance in conducting behavioural assessments.
3. Providing access to behavioural assessment tools and resources that aid in the evaluation process, ensuring consistency and objectivity in assessments.
4. Promoting a culture of continuous learning among pound staff, allowing them to regularly update their knowledge and skills in animal behaviour.

In conclusion, behavioural assessments are vital in determining the temperament and suitability of animals for adoption. Despite the challenges tied to conducting comprehensive evaluations, we are committed to finding solutions that enable us to continue providing successful adoptions and ensuring the best possible outcomes for the animals under our care.

We call upon the NSW Government to recognise the importance of behavioural assessments in pound operations and support local councils in providing the necessary resources and training for conducting thorough evaluations. By investing in staff expertise and support, we can improve the adoption process, enhance animal welfare, and promote responsible pet ownership.

(h) Relationship between New South Wales Pounds and Animal Rescue Organisations:

The collaboration between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations is integral to effective animal welfare management. This partnership allows for better outcomes in terms of the well-being and rehoming of animals under their care. Recognising the importance of communication, resource-sharing, and strong alliances, both parties can enhance animal welfare efforts and achieve positive results.

A transparent and consistent line of communication between pounds and animal rescue organisations is vital for successful collaboration. Sharing information about animals, including their behavioural traits and medical histories, enables rescue organisations to provide appropriate care

and find suitable homes. Effective communication prevents duplication of efforts and fosters a coordinated approach to animal rehoming.

Collaboration between pounds and animal rescue organisations facilitates resource sharing. This cooperative model allows both entities to maximise their impact by pooling financial support, supplies, and volunteer assistance. By combining their resources, pounds and rescue organisations can collectively improve animal welfare within their community.

Many pounds have established transfer and rehoming programs with animal rescue organisations. These initiatives enable animals to move from pounds to rescue organisations, where they receive specialised care and have increased opportunities for adoption. These programs have shown success in reducing euthanasia rates and increasing adoption numbers.

Animal rescue organisations often provide foster care programs for animals awaiting adoption. Collaborating with these organisations to offer temporary homes for animals helps alleviate overcrowding in pounds, offers individualised care, and enhances the animals' chances of successful rehoming.

Through joint efforts, pounds and rescue organisations can advocate for animal welfare, encourage responsible pet ownership, and educate the community on the benefits of adopting from shelters. By working together, they can make a positive impact in reducing the number of animals entering pounds and increasing public awareness of animal welfare issues.

In times of emergencies, such as natural disasters or large-scale rescues, the collaboration between pounds and rescue organisations becomes even more critical. By uniting their efforts, they can efficiently respond to save and care for animals in distress.

As a leading industry group, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) is dedicated to the well-being of animals in the community. We are committed to strengthening our relationship with animal rescue organisations to create a more substantial impact on providing quality care and finding permanent homes for animals in need.

In conclusion, the partnership between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations is pivotal in improving animal welfare outcomes. Through collaboration, communication, and resource-sharing, both entities can work together to enhance the well-being of animals in their care and reduce euthanasia rates. We remain committed to close cooperation with animal rescue organisations and the NSW Government to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for the animals we serve.

(i) Challenges Associated with the Number of Homeless Cats in New South Wales:

Addressing the challenges posed by the high number of homeless cats in New South Wales requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. The Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) recognises the complexity of this issue and proposes strategies to effectively tackle the challenges at hand.

Several key challenges contribute to the problem of homeless cats:

1. **Overpopulation:** The rapid breeding rate of cats can lead to an overabundance of stray and feral cats, exacerbating the issue of homeless cats.
2. **Irresponsible Ownership:** Cats that are not spayed or neutered, along with those allowed to roam freely, can contribute to unplanned litters and an increase in homeless cats.

3. Lack of Awareness: A lack of knowledge about responsible cat ownership and the importance of spaying/neutering further perpetuates the problem.

4. Resource Constraints: Local councils and animal welfare organisations may face limitations in implementing comprehensive desexing, adoption, and outreach programs.

To address these challenges, the following strategies are proposed:

1. Desexing Programs: Implement extensive and accessible desexing programs for both owned and stray cats. Providing subsidised or free desexing services encourages responsible pet owners to neuter their cats and helps control overpopulation.

2. Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch educational campaigns to inform the community about responsible cat ownership, the significance of desexing, and the consequences of allowing cats to roam freely.

3. Adoption and Fostering: Encourage adoption and fostering of homeless cats through collaboration with animal rescue organisations. Community engagement events can increase visibility and promote successful rehoming.

4. Veterinarian Involvement: Collaborate with veterinarians to promote desexing and responsible pet ownership. Veterinarians can educate pet owners about the benefits of desexing and ensure the well-being of owned cats.

5. Community Engagement: Engage the public in animal welfare initiatives, encouraging volunteering and shared responsibility in addressing homeless cat populations.

6. Support for Animal Rescue: Provide financial support and resources to reputable animal rescue organisations actively participating in rehoming efforts and responsible cat ownership promotion.

7. Enforcement of Laws: Strengthen the enforcement of existing desexing laws and regulations to prevent further breeding and reduce the number of homeless cats.

Addressing the issue of homeless cats requires a collaborative effort involving local councils, animal welfare organisations, veterinarians, and the community. By implementing a combination of strategies that include desexing programs, education, responsible ownership promotion, and community engagement, significant progress can be made in reducing the number of homeless cats in New South Wales. Together, we can create a more responsible and compassionate environment for cats and the broader community.

(j) The Introduction of Cat Curfews to Address Challenges of Free-Roaming Cats:

Considering the challenges posed by free-roaming cats, such as homeless cats, wildlife predation, and irresponsible ownership, the introduction of cat curfews is a potential measure that the NSW State Government could explore. A cat curfew involves restricting cats' outdoor activities during specific hours, usually at night, to mitigate their impact on various issues. While the implementation of cat curfews requires careful consideration and potential adjustments to current regulations, it can offer several benefits while addressing associated challenges.

Benefits of Cat Curfews:

1. Population Control: Cat curfews can help control the breeding of stray and feral cats, thereby reducing their population and decreasing the number of homeless cats.

2. **Wildlife Protection:** Cats, especially when allowed to roam freely at night, can pose a threat to local wildlife populations through predation. Cat curfews can help protect vulnerable species from this impact.

3. **Responsible Ownership:** Cat curfews encourage responsible pet ownership by motivating cat owners to keep their pets indoors or in enclosed outdoor spaces during curfew hours. This ensures their safety and minimises disturbances to neighbours.

4. **Nuisance Reduction:** Curfews can mitigate concerns related to cats entering private properties, causing disturbances, or leaving waste behind.

Challenges of Cat Curfews:

1. **Implementation and Enforcement:** Ensuring compliance with cat curfews might be challenging, particularly in areas with high cat populations or limited resources for monitoring.

2. **Community Acceptance:** Some cat owners may resist the idea of restricting their cats' outdoor activities, leading to potential resistance or noncompliance.

3. **Suitability for Feral Cats:** Cat curfews may not effectively address feral cat populations, as they are not confined to specific homes and may be harder to manage.

4. **Regional Variations:** The feasibility of cat curfews might vary depending on the locality, with rural or semi-rural environments potentially having different considerations.

5. **Alternative Approaches:** Other strategies, such as comprehensive desexing programs, responsible ownership education, and trap-neuter-return initiatives, may offer more effective solutions.

The introduction of cat curfews can be a valuable tool in managing free-roaming cat populations and promoting responsible ownership and wildlife conservation. However, the NSW State Government should carefully evaluate the appropriateness of such a measure for specific communities, considering local factors and challenges. A holistic approach that includes education, responsible ownership promotion, and collaboration with animal welfare organisations is recommended to address the complexities of homeless and free-roaming cats effectively.

(k) Strategies for Improving Treatment, Care, and Outcomes for Animals in New South Wales Pounds:

In the pursuit of elevating animal welfare and optimising available resources, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) strongly advocates for comprehensive strategies aimed at enhancing the treatment, care, and outcomes for animals in New South Wales pounds. By focusing on a multi-faceted approach that encompasses legislative improvements, staff training, community engagement, and responsible ownership promotion, we can collectively work towards a brighter future for animals in our care.

1. **Legislative Enhancements:** Collaborate with the NSW Government to review and update existing animal welfare legislation to ensure that it reflects modern standards of care and aligns with the evolving understanding of animal well-being. This includes clarifying standards for housing, enrichment, and medical care for animals in pounds.

2. **Training and Professional Development:** Invest in comprehensive training programs for pound staff that cover animal behaviour, health care, and humane handling techniques. Well-trained staff are essential for providing proper care, reducing stress for animals, and enhancing their overall well-being.

3. **Behavioural Assessment and Enrichment:** Implement thorough behavioural assessments for animals in pounds to better understand their individual needs and match them with suitable adopters. Develop and implement enrichment programs that cater to their mental and physical stimulation, improving their overall quality of life.
4. **Community Engagement:** Establish community outreach initiatives to educate the public about responsible pet ownership, the benefits of adopting from pounds, and the importance of desexing. Informed and responsible pet owners contribute to better outcomes for animals in the long run.
5. **Transparent Reporting:** Ensure transparency by regularly publishing pound statistics, including intake numbers, adoption rates, and euthanasia rates. Transparent reporting fosters accountability and provides insights into areas that require improvement.
6. **Foster Care Programs:** Collaborate with local animal rescue organisations and volunteers to establish foster care programs for animals in pounds. Foster care provides individualised attention, socialisation, and care, increasing animals' chances of successful rehoming.
7. **Adoption Promotion:** Launch adoption campaigns that leverage social media, community events, and partnerships with animal welfare organisations to increase the visibility of adoptable pets and encourage responsible adoption.
8. **Desexing Initiatives:** Collaborate with veterinarians and animal welfare organisations to provide subsidised or free desexing programs for pets in the community. This helps reduce overpopulation and the number of animals entering pounds.
9. **Resource Allocation:** Allocate sufficient funding to pounds to ensure they can provide high-quality care, nutrition, medical treatment, and enrichment activities for animals under their care.
10. **Collaboration with NGOs:** Forge partnerships with reputable animal rescue organisations to expand the resources available for rehoming efforts and share best practices in animal care.
11. **Regular Facility Upgrades:** Allocate resources for regular upgrades and maintenance of pound facilities to ensure they provide a safe, clean, and comfortable environment for animals.
12. **Community Volunteer Programs:** Encourage community involvement by establishing volunteer programs that allow residents to contribute to animal care efforts, such as walking dogs, socialising cats, and assisting with adoption events.
13. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaborations with private businesses, philanthropic organisations, and individuals who share a commitment to animal welfare. These partnerships can provide additional funding and resources for pound operations.

In conclusion, the Council Unites for Pets Reference Group (CUPS) is committed to advocating for the well-being of animals in New South Wales pounds. By implementing a holistic approach that includes legislative enhancements, staff training, community engagement, transparent reporting, and responsible ownership promotion, we can collectively work towards improving the treatment, care, and outcomes for animals in our care. This comprehensive strategy reflects our dedication to animal welfare and our commitment to fostering a compassionate and responsible environment for animals in New South Wales.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this submission in more detail, please do not hesitate to make contact with me

I look forward to playing an active role and further assisting with this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Leon Marskell
Chair
Council Unites for Pets Reference Group