

**Submission
No 71**

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: ACT Rescue and Foster

Date Received: 18 August 2023



The Director, Portfolio Committee 8 – Customer Service
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
(via email: PortfolioCommittee8@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Legislative Council Committee Inquiry into Pounds in NSW

Thank you for the invitation from Hon Emma Hurst MLC, Committee Chair, to offer comments in relation to the Portfolio Committee 8- Customer Service's Inquiry into NSW pounds.

About ACT Rescue and Foster

ACT Rescue and Foster (ARF) Inc, an incorporated non-profit association of people in the ACT and surrounding NSW region, has the formal object of rescuing dogs from euthanasia, fostering them in our homes, and then finding them permanent homes.

Our emphasis is on saving and improving the lives of dogs in the ACT and the surrounding region and specifically we focus on:

- rescuing and rehoming as many unwanted dogs that are presented to us (either impounded or surrendered) as possible
- educating the community and dog owners about dog companionship, socialisation, training and development
- working with Council pounds to help them achieve "minimum destruction" policies and procedures
- establishing and developing networks of communication with others involved in rescue and rehoming dogs.

We are a registered Rehoming organization in NSW (Rehoming No. R251000) and recently received a grant from the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) under the Companion Animals Rehoming Program, with a particular focus on dogs in regional areas.

As indicated in our recent return to the OLG (for financial year 2022-2023) 97 dogs came into our care during the year. Of these, only two needed to be euthanised: one for medical reasons and one for behavioral reasons.

Our primary relationships with NSW pounds are principally with pounds managed by the Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council, (at Queanbeyan), the Yass Valley Council (at Yass) and the Snowy Monaro Regional Council (at Cooma). We also receive dogs on occasion from metropolitan and regional Sydney, as well as NSW pounds that are much further afield.

Our submission, in the context of these relationships, addresses the following terms of reference:

- (a) resourcing challenges affecting New South Wales pounds, including the adequacy of funding given towards the operation of pounds by local and state governments;
- (e) factors influencing the number of animals ending up in New South Wales pounds, and strategies for reducing these numbers;
- (g) the role and challenges of behavioural assessments in New South Wales pounds; and
- (h) the relationship between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations.

ARF's Submission

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

As stated above, ARF was a successful recipient of the OLG 2023-24 Companion Animal Welfare Grant which will make an enormous difference to our ability to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome dogs. The majority of our spending is on veterinary bills, training and temporary boarding. This funding will also relieve pressure on pounds to allow them to take on more surrenders and temporarily contain lost dogs.

However, the funding must be spent within the 2023-24 financial year, with any underspend returned to the OLG and no information as to whether there will be funding in later years.

ARF strongly encourages the NSW Government to commit to recurrent funding for rescue organisations to complement the work done by NSW pounds. This would substantially reduce their financial costs and workload pressures, as well as contributing to stronger partnerships with rescue organisations, pounds and local communities.

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

We have observed several factors influencing impoundments experienced across all States and Territories. They are:

- surrenders of dogs post-Covid; during lockdown, companion animals were highly sought after by people who were working at home and who had more time to care

for them, however with many people now returning to workplaces, many people are struggling to continue providing the time and are struggling with the behaviours of adolescent, undersocialised dogs;

- the current increase in costs of living and housing stress forcing surrenders, especially when people are faced with unaffordable veterinary bills; and
- changes in living circumstances due to family breakdown, family violence and ageing.

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

We do assist in dog behavioural assessments at Queanbeyan and have done so for some years, on a regular basis. This is an integral part of our contribution to minimum destruction goals and is valued by Queanbeyan pound.

Being able to assess regularly means members of the public can get a better understanding of the dogs up for adoption. Our social media promotion of these dogs provides more publicity and therefore a better chance of the dogs being rehomed.

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

ARF has a strong, collaborative relationship with NSW pounds, especially with Queanbeyan and Yass.

We agree to this submission to be published in full with attribution.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this submission or ARF's work.

Angharad Lodwick
President
ACT Rescue and Foster

August 2023