

**Submission  
No 75**

## **INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Campbelltown City Council

**Date Received:** 18 August 2023

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

Dear Chairperson,

**Re: Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Pounds in NSW**

On behalf of Campbelltown City Council, we express our gratitude for the opportunity to respond to the key areas of the Terms of Reference of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Pounds. We recognise the significance of this Inquiry and its potential to have a positive impact on improving animal welfare standards across the State.

Due to the Inquiry's time constraints, this submission has not been formally presented to, or endorsed by the elected members of Campbelltown City Council. An addendum submission may be provided confirming the Council's position if need be.

Campbelltown City Council is committed to the well-being of our community's animals. We host a pound facility that accepts the second largest intake of animals in the state. Each year, we continue to commit recurrent operational funding and support capital upgrades to our pound facility to attempt to provide the best standard of care to our community's animals. These commitments come, however, at a cost to our ratepayers, when residents from other areas in Sydney are deriving the benefit. This inequity, particularly in this fiscally strained environment, needs immediate redress.

We urge this Inquiry to consider comprehensive reform to elevate the standard and consistency of care and share the burden equitably across the state. We propose the following options, listed in priority order:

1. Undertake comprehensive legislative, regulatory and administrative reform to ensure sufficient protection for animal welfare and care.
2. Create regional facilities funded by NSW Government (not resourced by Local Government) and managed by the NSW Government or an appropriate organisation that can undertake the services on Government's behalf.
3. Provide support to Local Government to provide the services on behalf of NSW Government. This option, however, should only be pursued if the NSW Government is unwilling to address the issues through comprehensive reform; or as a short-term measure.

Below is a response to each of the items within the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

### **(a) Resourcing Challenges affecting New South Wales Pounds:**

We value the opportunity to address the specific challenges that directly impact the residents of Campbelltown City Council. Our focus centres on the considerable resourcing obstacles that are currently affecting pounds across New South Wales. Of particular concern is the inadequate Government funding which significantly impacts the successful and sustainable operations of a pound.

As a responsible local governing body deeply committed to upholding animal welfare standards, we share strong concerns with other councils around the adverse repercussions stemming from inadequate, equitable and ongoing funding. To this end, the well-being of the animals under our care is unreasonably jeopardised, as is the occupational health and safety of our devoted staff members.

Significant population growth across the Macarthur area has seen unsustainable demands for pound services, encompassing sheltering, nourishment, veterinary care and rehoming. Pounds across the city and the State are full. Rehoming opportunities are very limited and only for the great work of our non-government carers and rehomingers, the magnitude of the problem has been lessened for now.

Regrettably, the available funding frequently falls short of adequately addressing the necessities of managing abandoned or stray animals. The implications of this funding shortfall extend beyond the animals themselves, affecting the calibre of services rendered and the well-being of our pound staff.

The scarcity of resources due to insufficient funding considerably restrains the ability of councils to provide the requisite level of care, essential for ensuring the welfare of the animals in our custody.

Adequate shelter, proper nourishment, access to veterinary care, and enriching activities are pivotal for their physical and mental health. The absence of sufficient funding from the State Government is currently impeding our capacity to meet these fundamental requirements, consequently compromising animal welfare across the State.

The inadequacy of Government funding for pound operations doesn't solely impact animal welfare; it also places a great strain on the broader community and the delivery of much needed facilities and operations for the betterment of the community. The heavy reliance and diversion of rates revenue into the management and care of animals and the operation of the pound facility, reduces the council's ability to attend to other important community matters. The burden is particularly acute for Campbelltown as many animals are transported to the Campbelltown Animal Care Facility (ACF) from other council areas. This practice results in an unfair burden on the Campbelltown community, and places great strain on the ACF staff in continually having to manage, care for and rehome high numbers of animals.

Campbelltown City Council oversees one of the State's most significant Animal Care Facilities in terms of volume, second in scale only to the Blacktown Animal Rehoming Centre. Over the last six years, the operational expenses for the ACF have averaged close to \$1.3 million per year, while the corresponding revenue has averaged around \$475,000 (fees and charges and fine income from registration programs) during the same duration. As a result, this has led to an annual shortfall exceeding \$800,000 per annum (from general revenue).

Local government pounds frequently collaborate with various community programs and activities, and the limited resources hinder effective collaboration. Again, this shortfall in funding diverts attention and resources away from other indispensable community initiatives.

The recent decision by RSPCA NSW to withdraw from animal shelters across New South Wales has dealt a significant blow to communities throughout the state, including Campbelltown. This move has shifted the responsibility of caring for the multitude of animals they used to oversee onto local councils. Regrettably, this transition comes without the accompanying funding that the NSW Government had recently allocated to Animal Welfare Groups – an impressive sum of \$40 million.

Astonishingly, none of these funds were directed towards Local Government. We are unable to ascertain why Local Government, and the communities we support, did not benefit from this funding.

Sufficient funding is not only paramount for the well-being of animals in Animal Welfare Organisations but is desperately needed by the local council as it plays an integral role in safeguarding the animals in our care along with the occupational health and safety of our dedicated pound staff.

Inadequate funding is contributing to a deficiency in the availability of vital resources and training needed to uphold a secure working environment for our pound staff. It is of utmost importance that we give precedence to the safety and well-being of these employees, who play an instrumental role in caring for the animals in our facility.

Considering the challenges posed by resource and funding constraints, we strongly request the NSW Government explore avenues for a funding allocation specifically for council-operated pounds. The availability of adequate funding is critical to support the indispensable functions of pounds, ensuring the well-being of the animals in our care and the work health and safety of our staff.

To this end, we strongly advocate for the following actions:

1. Assign supplementary funding to local councils with a specific focus on pound operations, factoring in the escalating demand for services and the necessary resources to maintain elevated animal welfare standards;
2. Collaborate with Local Government to recognise and address the distinct resource challenges faced by individual pounds across New South Wales, and customise a solution that meets our unique requisites;
3. Acknowledge the significance of animal welfare and the pivotal role played by pounds in safeguarding the welfare of animals within our communities and consider rolling the legislative responsibilities surrounding the care and management of animals, currently now shared between the Office of Local Government and the Department of Primary Industries, into one portfolio. This would place all animals under one banner of administration, which would assist with the consistency in the promotion of all animal welfare and care practices, under a single budgetary framework, through uniformed policy and legislative measures and appropriate prioritised funding for pound operations to facilitate resource allocation. The amalgamation of the animal related functions into one function, overseeing Pound Management across the State along with other agencies such as the RSPCA, Animal Welfare League, and the recognised rescue organisations is considered to be more effective and efficient way to achieve the sustainable management of our animals, and an important step in raising the significance of our animals and their proper care and management to our communities; and
4. Allocate funds for comprehensive training and development programs for pound staff, aimed at enhancing their competencies, knowledge, and practices pertaining to occupational health and safety.

In summation, we underline the pressing need to confront the resource challenges confronting New South Wales pounds, particularly those related to funding.

The availability of adequate funding is imperative to provide superior care for the animals within our custody and to assure the well-being of our dedicated pound staff.

Having the NSW Government take over the purview of Animal Policy, Practice, and Legislative reform as a whole and having the budget to invest in pound operations, we can uphold the commitment to animal welfare and bolster the pivotal role these critical facilities play within our communities.

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

The existing condition of pound structures and facilities in New South Wales raises substantial concerns. Many pounds grapple with difficulties stemming from outdated architecture and limited space, and inconsistent or unresolved housing standards for facilities resulting in overcrowding and detrimental impacts on the well-being of animals under our care, and the staff caring for them. The shortage of ample room, appropriate shelters, and modern amenities can impede our ability to deliver the level of care and solace that these animals rightfully deserve.

The Campbelltown ACF has been burdened with the role of a catch-all destination for animals within the South West Sydney corridor. As the singular large Council-owned and managed facility in the vicinity, we find ourselves inundated with pleas to accept animals from neighbouring areas such as Camden, Liverpool, and Canterbury/Bankstown.

Due to our perceived status as a large facility, their residents often rely on our pound services. The same services that the rate payers of Campbelltown are compelled to pay for, maintain and upgrade due to an overwhelming demand.

The following impoundment statistics have been compiled from data provided by the Office of Local Government for the fiscal year 2022-23, outlining impounding figures across neighbouring Local Government Areas (LGAs):

- Campbelltown: 789 dogs, 774 cats
- Penrith: 424 dogs, 502 cats
- Fairfield: 260 dogs, 30 cats
- Liverpool: 356 dogs, 4 cats
- Canterbury Bankstown: 209 dogs, 37 cats
- Wollondilly: 195 dogs, 58 cats
- Camden: 137 dogs, 68 cats
- Wingecarribee: 107 dogs, 227 cats

For comparative purposes, it is noteworthy that Blacktown City Council, the largest council in New South Wales with a population of approximately 400,000 residents, observed a slightly higher count of impounded dogs (851) and a marginally less number of impounded cats (768) during the same reporting period.

This serves as a contextual benchmark to assess the magnitude and variation of impoundment activities within various regions. Particularly when set against the population growth in each of the areas.

Through community anecdotes we have heard that vets in surrounding areas often refer people to Campbelltown's ACF to surrender animals.

The presented impoundment data for the fiscal year 2022-23 underscores a profound impact on the Campbelltown Local Government Area (LGA), exacerbating financial stress and exerting considerable strain on our human resources and budgetary allocations.

With a staggering 789 dogs and 774 cats impounded, the Campbelltown LGA is grappling with a substantial influx of animals requiring care, attention, and management. This surge places an immense burden on our already stretched human resources, demanding additional manpower to handle the administrative, operational, and logistical aspects of caring for these impounded animals.

Moreover, this escalating impoundment rate imposes an undeniable and inequitable financial burden on our community's budget.

The costs associated with sheltering, feeding, providing veterinary care, and implementing proper protocols for these impounded animals come with significant financial implications. Additional funds are needed to ensure their well-being, safety, and eventual rehoming, straining our budgetary allocations and potentially diverting resources away from other crucial community services and initiatives.

As we grapple with the challenge of managing the increase in population as well as this influx of impounded animals, it becomes imperative to re-evaluate and optimise our resource allocation strategies. It is vital that we seek sustainable solutions to address these heightened impoundment figures, not only for the welfare of the animals but also to ensure equity across ratepayers, the prudent use of our resources and maintain the integrity of our budgetary commitments.

The unattractive combination of congested and outdated pound facilities also contributes to elevated stress levels among animals, rendering them susceptible to an array of health and behavioural challenges. The constrained space has led to issues of occupancy issues, reduced opportunities for exercise, inadequate social interaction, and ultimately jeopardised welfare. These outdated pound facilities place an additional risk and burden on the welfare of our staff.

While our commitment to animal well-being remains steadfast, the high occupancy rates have placed us in a legislative quandary: prioritising either the safety of the animals or that of our staff. It is the case that staff safety must be given precedence, culminating in adverse outcomes for animals that struggle in behavioural assessments and potential rehoming.

We strongly advocate for increased investment from the NSW Government in funding and advancing superior pound facilities that incorporate contemporary and upgraded infrastructure and services of a size that is commensurate with the expected population growth for the area. A facility of this calibre would cater to the fastest-growing region in the State and Australia. The facility could be well located to serve the needs for the whole of the Macarthur Region.

Such a facility would function not only as a local resource for each council but also as a central hub for the entire Macarthur Region, adeptly housing, tending to, and facilitating the rehoming of animals from a very wide region.

The central tenets of this envisioned facility should encompass the following:

1. Encompass innovative design principles that prioritise animal welfare, incorporating expansive and comfortable living spaces, adequate exercise zones, animal and owner training, and areas for enrichment.
2. Feature on-site veterinary clinics or ready access to veterinary services, guaranteeing swift and comprehensive medical attention for animals in need.



3. Possess ample capacity to house animals from various regional pounds, promoting synergy among local councils and optimising resource utilisation.
4. Devote specific spaces for behavioural evaluations and enrichment initiatives tailored to each animal's distinct needs, thus enhancing their chances for successful adoptions.
5. Establish dedicated adoption centres within the facility, streamlining the adoption process and facilitating the discovery of suitable forever homes for our animal companions.

The establishment of a contemporary and innovative Animal Rehoming Facility in the Macarthur Region promises many advantages, including:

1. Ensuring the animals' overall well-being and bolstering their physical and psychological health through modern, spacious, and well-equipped facilities.
2. Amplifying resource management and cost-effectiveness through collaborative efforts among multiple councils in the region.
3. Enhancing the visibility of adoptable animals through a centralised facility, potentially leading to higher adoption rates.
4. Fostering a focal point for community engagement, education, and initiatives centred on responsible pet ownership and animal welfare.

In conclusion, the state of pound facilities across New South Wales necessitates significant, prompt and decisive action.

We urge the NSW Government to prioritise investment in Animal Rehoming Facilities that serves the regional or State needs, elevating pound infrastructure to ensure a secure, nurturing, and supportive environment for the animals entrusted to our care.

By uniting our efforts and making strategic investments, we honour our responsibility to safeguard and champion 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 Campbelltown City Council, animal care and welfare are of utmost importance to us. 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. This increase is due to a number of factors, including population growth, cost-of-living pressures, returning to work environments following the COVID-19 pandemic, and other pressures being experienced in the home environment. Limited funding opportunities 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 the spread of disease and overpopulation and reduce the number of animals ending up in pounds.

5. Threats and attacks against both the pound, and its staff are all too frequent and in most cases stem from financial issues, many of which are related to the imposition of state government fines, fees and charges.

We wholeheartedly support the Governments implementation of their current companion animal standards and guidelines through the Office of Local Government. 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.

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

1. Prioritised funding opportunities for councils 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, Campbelltown City Council is committed to improving animal care and welfare in our 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 local governing body, we are committed to upholding the utmost standards of animal welfare. Campbelltown City Council readily 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) as the guiding principles governing pounds.

Both the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 play an vital role in establishing a regulatory bedrock for animal welfare benchmarks within pounds across the State. These comprehensive directives delineate the obligations incumbent upon local councils and other entities operating pounds, ensuring the well-being and proper care of animals within their guardianship. Among their essential provisions are stipulations related to housing, sustenance, exercise, veterinary care, and desexing requisites, all aimed at safeguarding animals and ensuring their welfare throughout their tenure in pounds.



While the existing guidelines furnish a strong foundation, we recognise the necessity for recurrent reviews and updates to address emergent challenges and assimilate cutting-edge practices. The landscape of animal welfare and pound management continually evolves, making ongoing review and refinement vital to ensuring the provision of the most effective and compassionate care for our animal companions.

The existing duality of Government Agencies (Office of Local Government and Department of Primary Industries) overseeing separate Animal Welfare Programs and Guidelines has proven difficult and counterproductive in the governance of holistic animal welfare and management for the State. Moving the responsibility for animal care and welfare for all animals under one Agency, tailored to specifically address animal welfare concerns, including those relevant to pounds, holds promise in ameliorating the current cross agency challenges and responsibilities faced by the 128 local councils and their affiliated pounds.

Concurrent with regular assessments, a strong enforcement and compliance framework will prove indispensable to ensure adherence to the regulations governing pounds. This encompasses certifying that all pounds are adequately provisioned with resources, infrastructure, and proficient personnel to align with and uphold the various standards. By instituting a robust enforcement mechanism, we will be able to more effectively shield the welfare of animals and promote accountability among pound operators. The present arrangement of having a Charitable Organisation functioning as an enforcement agency in opposition to Local Government rather than in collaboration is conducive to discord and funding jurisdictional disputes. Unifying these entities under one portfolio and brand would alleviate these issues.

To reinforce the regulatory fabric underpinning animal welfare within pounds, we respectfully urge the NSW Government to deliberate upon the following measures:

1. Conduct periodic assessments of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5, integrating evolving best practices and advancements in animal welfare standards. These evaluations should encompass bespoke guidelines tailored for Local Government-operated pounds.
2. Institute a singular State-administered Agency tasked with implementing an elevated enforcement and compliance regimen to assure rigorous adherence to pound-related regulations. This should encompass routine inspections, audits, and transparent reporting to monitor compliance and expediently rectify any shortcomings.
3. Bolster Local Government pounds with the requisite resources to align with prescribed standards. Adequate funding and training avenues will empower Council-operated pounds to perpetuate elevated levels of care and animal welfare.
4. Foster a culture of collaboration and knowledge exchange among stakeholders, spanning Local Government, non-governmental organisations, veterinary professionals, and animal welfare experts. Through this collective approach, more potent regulations can materialise, alongside enhanced outcomes for animal welfare.

In summation, Campbelltown City Council supports the development of a robust regulatory framework governing animal welfare within New South Wales pounds. While the existing guidelines provide a strong foundation, periodic reviews and updates, coupled with a balanced enforcement and compliance framework, are requisite to overcoming the evolving challenges and guarantee optimal care for pound-residing animals.

We remain committed to working with and alongside the NSW Government and other stakeholders in amplifying these regulations, thereby championing the highest levels of animal welfare.

### **(e) Factors Influencing the Number of Animals Ending up in New South Wales Pounds:**

Several factors contribute to the escalating numbers of animals entering pounds, including:

1. irresponsible pet ownership;
2. lack of regulatory reform and enforcement of backyard breeding;
3. limited awareness of responsible pet care;
4. increase in the cost of living issues such as rental, mortgages, food, and expenses;
5. community confusion over the current two-step registration process;
6. suboptimal desexing practices; and
7. a lack of incentives.

The surge in backyard breeding, particularly during the Covid pandemic, coupled with heightened living costs stemming from increased interest rates, and elevated expenses for essentials like food, fuel, and utilities, has tragically transformed companion animals into expendable commodities, predominantly affecting lower socio-economic communities across both metropolitan and rural areas of the state.

While the wealthier Local Government Areas (LGAs) and suburbs across the State tend to host breeds that are chosen for their aesthetic appeal, convenience and temperament, it is evident that many of the economically disadvantaged areas within our state are populated with larger breeds, and in particular breeds such as Staffordshire Bull Terriers and American Staffordshire Terriers.

These breeds have a higher likelihood of being surrendered to or ending up in local pounds, in contrast to the popular Cavoodle or Labradoodle types often associated with more affluent suburbs of eastern Sydney.

While educational campaigns and community outreach initiatives hold the potential in addressing these issues, a more urgent need lies in curtailing the influx of animals into pounds. Campbelltown City Council takes proactive measures through education campaigns like Companion Animal Welfare Scheme (CAWS) and Keeping Cats Safe at Home (KCSH) Programs, instrumental in fostering responsible pet ownership awareness and advocating for proper desexing practices. While commendable, the ongoing and effective encouragement of responsible pet care, necessitate additional funding to cultivate a collective sense of community responsibility for animal welfare, thus nurturing a more compassionate and knowledgeable society.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge the financial ramifications these endeavours pose for local governments and communities. The expenses associated with organising and executing such campaigns can be substantial, spanning advertising, educational materials, public events, and human resources. Additionally, the shift to lifetime registration in NSW, while advantageous for pet owners, has dampened registration revenue, eroding the once-vibrant funding source for diverse animal-related initiatives, including education campaigns and community outreach.

In light of these challenges, we present the following recommendations:

1. Allocate dedicated funds from the NSW state budget to sustain ongoing education campaigns and community outreach programs centred on responsible pet ownership and desexing. Such funds would empower local councils to execute effective initiatives while reducing dependency on registration revenue.

2. Cultivate partnerships with credible NGOs and animal welfare organisations to distribute costs and resources for education campaigns and outreach. Collaborative endeavours can extend the reach of these initiatives, magnifying their impact across the state.
3. Pave the way for legislative changes that encourage private enterprises, philanthropists, and animal enthusiasts to contribute through sponsorships and donations to bolster local pounds' educational programs and outreach. Public-private partnerships can markedly amplify available resources for animal welfare initiatives.
4. Institute added incentives for conscientious pet proprietors, such as reduced registration fees for desexed pets or access to discounted veterinary services. Such incentives can foster a culture of prioritising responsible pet care and desexing. The recent implementation of requirements for permits in the absence of desexing has inadvertently driven some pet owners to circumvent responsible practices like microchipping, desexing, and registration, underlining the need for re-evaluation and collaboration with local governments and those managing animal affairs on a grassroots level.
5. Establish a comprehensive tracking and assessment system to gauge the efficacy of education campaigns and outreach initiatives. Insights gleaned from impact evaluations can refine strategies and optimise resource allocation for forthcoming programs.

We firmly believe that the implementation of these recommendations will have a positive effect on the financial hurdles inherent in education campaigns and community outreach. By securing sustainable funding and fostering partnerships, we can advance the cause of responsible pet ownership, ultimately diminishing the influx of animals into pounds across New South Wales.

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

As a local government entity committed to the well-being of animals under our stewardship, our paramount objective is to curtail euthanasia rates and secure optimal outcomes for the animals entrusted to our care.

At Campbelltown City Council, we understand the gravity of euthanasia and its profound repercussions for both the animals in question, our staff and our wider community. Over the past decade, we have expended substantial time and resources to implement initiatives that have yielded remarkable reductions in euthanasia rates, concurrently elevating the standards of animal welfare. The transformation is stark with records for the financial year 2010/11, showing that over half of the incoming feline and canine inhabitants of our pounds faced euthanasia.

Through a concerted amalgamation of education, networking, and the amplification of our online presence via social media platforms, these figures have dwindled dramatically in recent years. Notably, our persistence has resulted in a decline in euthanasia rates to as low as 2% for cats and 5% for dogs in recent times. However, it is the case, and despite our best efforts to rehome animals, that we acknowledge recent surges in dog-related incidents, inclusive of attacks and disruptive behaviour stemming from owners who have inadequately trained or cared for their pets.

Consequently, we've witnessed a spike in cases where animals are classified as menacing or dangerous, or are surrendered by owners unable to provide the requisite care or control. Regrettably, this confluence of factors has led to an increase in euthanasia rates in the current year of 2023.

Our relentless commitment to animal welfare remains unwavering, even as we grapple with these challenging circumstances.

Campbelltown City Council takes pride in our efforts in this regard which include:

1. Our prioritisation of adoption as the primary means of finding devoted, caring and permanent homes for the animals in our care. Through our comprehensive adoption programs and promotional efforts, we strive to increase the number of successful adoptions and reduce the need for euthanasia.
2. We actively collaborate with reputable animal rescue organisations to increase the opportunities for rehoming animals. These partnerships enhance the reach and resources available for finding suitable homes for our shelter animals.
3. Educating the community about responsible pet ownership is essential in reducing the number of animals that end up in pounds. We advocate for pet desexing, proper identification, and responsible care, which can help prevent unplanned litters and pet surrenders.

Transparent reporting of euthanasia rates and other relevant statistics is crucial in tracking our progress and identifying areas for improvement. We recognise the significance of open communication with the community and stakeholders regarding euthanasia practices.

By providing transparent data, we can foster trust, accountability, and a collective commitment to animal welfare.

We understand that minimising euthanasia rates is an ongoing effort, and we are committed to the continuous improvement in our practices. This includes regularly evaluating our strategies, identifying challenges, and seeking innovative solutions to further reduce euthanasia rates and improve the overall welfare of the animals in our care.

In support of our commitment to minimising euthanasia rates and enhancing animal welfare, we call upon the NSW Government to consider the following actions:

1. Provide additional funding opportunities for local councils to invest in comprehensive adoption and rehoming programs, which will facilitate the successful placement of animals into forever homes.
2. Allocate resources to support community education initiatives that promote responsible pet ownership and emphasise the importance of adopting from pounds and rescue organisations.
3. Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among local councils, animal rescue organisations, and animal welfare experts to develop effective strategies for reducing euthanasia rates.

In conclusion, Campbelltown City Council is committed to minimising euthanasia rates through increased adoption efforts, collaboration with animal rescue organisations, and promoting responsible pet ownership. Transparent reporting of euthanasia rates and other relevant statistics is essential to track our progress and improve our practices continually. We are dedicated to working collaboratively with the NSW Government and other stakeholders to achieve the best possible outcomes for the animals in our care.

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

As a local government entity dedicated to animal welfare, we recognise the significance of behavioural assessments and the challenges associated with conducting comprehensive 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, allowing us to make informed decisions about their suitability for adoption into loving homes. By understanding an animal's unique traits and needs, we can match them with families that can provide a nurturing and suitable environment, reducing the risk of returned adoptions.

Conducting comprehensive behavioural assessments can be challenging for several reasons:

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

To address the challenges associated with behavioural assessments, we advocate for increased support and training for pound staff in conducting thorough evaluations. This includes:

1. Allocate 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. Foster collaborations with animal behaviour experts and professionals who can provide guidance, mentorship, and assistance in conducting behavioural assessments;
3. Provide access to behavioural assessment tools and resources that can aid in the evaluation process, ensuring consistency and objectivity in the assessments;
4. State Government assistance in providing councils access to qualified animal behaviour assessment experts; and
5. Encourage a culture of continuous learning among pound staff, where they can regularly update their knowledge and skills in animal behaviour.

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

We call upon the NSW Government to consider 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 relationship between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations is a critical component of animal welfare management. Ongoing collaboration between these entities is essential in achieving positive outcomes for the well-being and rehoming of animals in our care. We understand the importance of streamlining communication, sharing resources, and establishing strong partnerships to improve animal welfare outcomes.

Open and regular communication between pounds and animal rescue organisations is crucial for effective collaboration. Sharing information about animals in need, their behavioural traits, and medical histories ensures that rescue organisations can provide appropriate care and find suitable forever homes for these animals. Clear and timely communication also helps prevent duplication of efforts and fosters a more coordinated approach to rehoming.

Collaboration between pounds and animal rescue organisations can allow for the sharing of resources, including financial assistance, supplies, and volunteer support. This pooling model of resources enables both parties to optimise their efforts and make the most significant impact on animal welfare in our community.

Many pounds have established transfer and rehoming programs with animal rescue organisations. These initiatives facilitate the movement of animals from pounds to rescue organisations, where they receive specialised care and have increased opportunities for adoption. These programs have proven successful in reducing euthanasia rates and increasing the number of animals finding loving homes.

Animal rescue organisations often have foster care programs, providing temporary homes for animals until they find permanent adoptive families. This collaborative effort helps relieve overcrowding in pounds, provides individualised care for animals, and increases their chances of successful rehoming.

By working together, pounds and rescue organisations can advocate for animal welfare issues, promote responsible pet ownership, and educate the community about the importance of adopting from shelters. These joint efforts can have a positive impact on reducing the number of animals entering pounds and increase public awareness about animal welfare.

During emergency situations, such as natural disasters or large-scale rescues, collaboration between pounds and rescue organisations becomes even more critical. Working together ensures a coordinated and efficient response to save and care for animals in distress.

As a local government entity committed to the well-being of our community's animals, Campbelltown City Council actively seeks to strengthen its relationship with animal rescue organisations. We recognise that by working together, we can make a more significant impact in providing high-quality care and finding permanent homes for animals in need.

In conclusion, the relationship between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations plays a vital role in improving animal welfare outcomes. Collaboration, communication, and resource sharing are essential elements of this partnership, allowing us to enhance the well-being of animals in our community and reduce euthanasia rates. We are committed to working closely with animal rescue organisations and the NSW Government to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for the animals in our care.



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

Campbelltown City Council, acknowledges the importance of addressing the challenges associated with the number of homeless cats in New South Wales. This is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach to find effective and sustainable solutions.

The issue of homeless cats in New South Wales poses significant challenges, including:

1. cats being prolific breeders, and without proper management, their numbers can quickly escalate, leading to more strays and abandoned cats and an overpopulation;
2. irresponsible pet ownership, such as failing to desex cats or allowing them to roam freely, can exacerbate the problem of homeless cats. Unplanned litters often end up as strays, further adding to the population of homeless cats;
3. a lack of awareness about responsible cat ownership and the importance of desexing can hinder efforts to address overpopulation and reduce the number of homeless cats;
4. local councils and animal welfare organisations facing resourcing constraints in implementing comprehensive desexing programs, adoption initiatives, and outreach campaigns to address the issue effectively.

To tackle the challenges of homeless cats in New South Wales, we propose the following strategies:

1. Allocate sufficient funding to New South Wales pounds to ensure that they have the resources necessary to provide high-quality care for animals in their custody. Adequate funding will enable them to offer proper nutrition, veterinary treatment, enrichment activities, and comfortable housing for the animals;
2. Invest in the upgrade of pound facilities;
3. Undertake extensive state-wide public awareness and education campaigns;
4. Fund desexing campaigns;
5. Implement robust adoption promotion programs to increase the visibility of animals in pounds and encourage responsible individuals and families to adopt them. Utilise social media, community events, and partnerships with animal rescue organisations to showcase adoptable pets;
6. Establish foster care programs that allow animals to be placed temporarily in pre-qualified homes, providing them with individualised care and socialisation while they await adoption. Foster care can significantly improve an animal's chances of finding a forever home;
7. Conduct thorough behaviour assessments to better understand each animal's temperament and needs, enabling pounds to match them with suitable adopters. Implement enrichment programs that cater to the mental and physical stimulation of the animals to enhance their well-being;
8. Fund behavioural assessment training for pound staff;
9. Foster strong collaborations between pounds, NGOs and reputable animal rescue organisations to expand the resources available for rehoming efforts and share best practices in animal care;
10. Invest in ongoing training and professional development for pound staff to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to provide optimal care for the animals. Training should cover topics such as animal behaviour, health care, and customer service;
11. Community Education: Launch educational campaigns to raise awareness about responsible pet ownership, the importance of desexing, and the benefits of adopting from pounds. Educated and informed pet owners are more likely to provide lifelong, loving homes for animals;

12. Collaborate with veterinarians and local councils to implement Government subsidised or free desexing programs for pets in the community. Reducing the number of unplanned litters will help curb overpopulation and decrease the influx of animals into pounds;
13. Maintain transparency in reporting pound statistics, including euthanasia rates, adoption rates, and animal intake numbers. Transparent reporting fosters accountability and helps identify areas for improvement;
14. Actively seek opportunities to rehome animals before they enter the pound system through collaboration with local rescue organisations and community outreach programs;
15. Foster partnerships with private businesses, philanthropic organisations, and individuals who share a commitment to animal welfare. Such partnerships can provide additional funding and resources for pound operations; and
16. Strengthen legislation to promote responsible pet ownership and mandate desexing, along with accountability measures.

Addressing the issue of homeless cats in New South Wales requires a collaborative effort involving local councils, animal welfare organisations, veterinarians, and the community. By implementing comprehensive desexing programs, promoting responsible pet ownership, and encouraging adoption and fostering initiatives, we can make significant progress in reducing the number of homeless cats in our communities. Together, we can create a more compassionate and responsible environment for cats in New South Wales and bring our state into line with other states and territories who have already adopted this approach.

The introduction of cat curfews is a potential measure the NSW State Government can aim at to address various challenges associated with free-roaming cats, including reducing the number of homeless cats, minimising the impact on wildlife, and promoting responsible cat ownership.

A cat curfew typically involves restricting cats from roaming freely during specific hours, usually at night, to prevent them from contributing to overpopulation and other related issues. While implementing cat curfews may vary depending on a change to the current regulations and community needs, it is essential to consider both the potential benefits and challenges of such a measure.

#### Benefits of Cat Curfews:

1. By restricting cats' outdoor activities during peak breeding times, cat curfews can help control the population of stray and feral cats, leading to a decrease in the number of homeless cats.
2. Cats, especially those allowed to roam freely at night, can have a significant impact on local wildlife populations through predation. Curfews can minimise the risk to native wildlife, particularly vulnerable species.
3. Cat curfews promote responsible pet ownership by encouraging cat owners to keep their pets indoors or in enclosed outdoor spaces during curfew hours, ensuring their safety and reducing potential nuisances to neighbours.
4. Limiting the roaming activities of cats at night can help address concerns related to cats entering private properties, causing disturbances, or leaving behind waste.

There are, however, challenges associated with the implementation of cat curfews:

1. Implementing and enforcing cat curfews can be challenging, particularly in regions with high cat populations or limited resources for monitoring compliance.
2. Some cat owners may be resistant to the idea of restricting their cats' outdoor freedom, leading to potential pushback from the community.

3. Curfews may not be as effective for domestic stray or feral cats, as they are not typically confined to a specific home and may be more difficult to manage.
4. Cat curfews would necessitate resource-intensive compliance.
5. Cat curfews may not be suitable for all areas or situations, especially in rural or semi-rural environments where cat roaming is considered less problematic.
6. Other measures, such as comprehensive desexing programs, responsible cat ownership education, and trap-neuter-return (TNR) initiatives for domestic stray and feral cat populations, may be more effective in addressing the challenges of free-roaming cats.

The introduction of cat curfews is a potential tool for managing free-roaming cat populations, promoting responsible ownership, and protecting our wildlife. However, it is crucial to carefully consider the specific circumstances and needs of each community, as well as explore alternative strategies to address the challenges associated with homeless and free-roaming cats.

A comprehensive approach, including education, responsible pet ownership, and collaboration with animal welfare organisations, may yield more significant and sustainable results in improving the welfare of cats and the broader community.

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

In pursuit of enhancing animal welfare and optimising resources, Campbelltown City Council strongly advocates for the implementation of a Regional based Animal Care Model by the NSW Government.

This strategic approach would entail the establishment of a series of large, purpose-built Animal Care Facilities overseen by the Government to ensure consistency in housing, care and rehoming practices across the State for its animals. Such a model would streamline services, foster collaboration, and ensure the provision of comprehensive and efficient care for our beloved animals across the region. By embracing this approach, we can collectively create a more compassionate and effective system that addresses the diverse needs of our animal community under the leadership and coordination of the NSW Government, with Local Government playing a supporting role in the regulation of companion animals in their respective local government areas.

A Regional based Animal Care Facility Model funded and managed by the NSW Government would provide several benefits, including enhanced coordination and resource allocation. By centralising animal care efforts, we can optimise funding, streamline services, and ensure a consistent, high standard of care across regions.

This model enables efficient collaboration between local councils and animal welfare organisations, facilitating comprehensive initiatives to address overpopulation, promote responsible pet ownership, and find loving homes for animals. A government-led approach fosters a unified and sustainable system that prioritises animal welfare and strengthens the collective commitment to caring for our community's animals.

Improving treatment, care, and outcomes for animals in New South Wales pounds requires a comprehensive and compassionate approach that prioritises their well-being and focuses on finding permanent, loving homes for them. The following strategies can be adopted to help achieve these goals:

1. Allocate sufficient funding to New South Wales pounds to ensure that they have the resources necessary to provide high-quality care for animals in their custody. Adequate funding will enable them to offer proper nutrition, veterinary treatment, enrichment activities, and comfortable housing for the animals.
2. Invest in the upgrade of pound facilities.
3. Undertake extensive public awareness and education campaigns.
4. Fund desexing campaigns.
5. Implement robust adoption promotion programs to increase the visibility of animals in pounds and encourage responsible individuals and families to adopt them. Utilise social media, community events, and partnerships with animal rescue organisations to showcase adoptable pets.
6. Establish foster care programs that allow animals to be placed temporarily in pre-qualified homes, providing them with individualised care and socialisation while they await adoption. Foster care can significantly improve an animal's chances of finding a forever home.
7. Conduct thorough behaviour assessments to better understand each animal's temperament and needs, enabling pounds to match them with suitable adopters. Implement enrichment programs that cater to the mental and physical stimulation of the animals to enhance their well-being. Fund behavioural assessment training for pound staff.
8. Foster strong collaborations between pounds, NGOs and reputable animal rescue organisations to expand the resources available for rehoming efforts and share best practices in animal care.
9. Invest in ongoing training and professional development for pound staff to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to provide optimal care for the animals. Training should cover topics such as animal behaviour, health care, and customer service.
10. Community Education: Launch educational campaigns to raise awareness about responsible pet ownership, the importance of desexing, and the benefits of adopting from pounds. Educated and informed pet owners are more likely to provide lifelong, loving homes for animals.
11. Collaborate with veterinarians and local councils to implement subsidised or free desexing programs for pets in the community. Reducing the number of unplanned litters will help curb overpopulation and decrease the influx of animals into pounds.
12. Maintain transparency in reporting pound statistics, including euthanasia rates, adoption rates, and animal intake numbers. Transparent reporting fosters accountability and helps identify areas for improvement.
13. Actively seek opportunities to rehome animals before they enter the pound system through collaboration with local rescue organisations and community outreach programs.
14. Foster partnerships with private businesses, philanthropic organisations, and individuals who share a commitment to animal welfare. Such partnerships can provide additional funding and resources for pound operations.
15. Strengthen legislation to promote responsible pet ownership and mandate desexing, along with accountability measures

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Campbelltown City Council's response to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Pounds demonstrates our dedication to the well-being of animals in their community and the broader region. The strategies proposed, including adequate funding, adoption promotion, care programs, behaviour assessment, and community education, reflect a comprehensive and compassionate approach to improving animal care and outcomes in NSW pounds and sets an

example for the NSW Government to take the lead in adopting some of the recommendations within this submission.

Campbelltown City Council's recognition of the value of every animal's life and its commitment to finding safe and loving forever homes underscores its dedication to animal welfare. By fostering collaboration with animal rescue organisations, implementing transparent reporting, and encouraging community involvement, we are aiming to create a positive impact on the welfare of animals and the community as a whole.

This submission showcases the importance of addressing resourcing challenges, improving pound facilities, and enhancing laws and regulations. The need for further advocacy for increased funding allocation, collaboration within pound operators, prioritisation of animal welfare, enhanced enforcement and compliance regimes, consistency of standards across all NSW pound facilities, and investment in staff training highlights some of the proactive approaches that can be taken to address these challenges to ensure a high and consistent quality of animal welfare across NSW.

In closing, we trust that our submission serves as a valuable contribution to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry, highlighting the significance of animal welfare and the commitment of the Council and our staff to this submission in working towards a brighter future for animals in New South Wales pounds. We appreciate the NSW Government's dedication to ongoing evaluation and refinement of pound practices and their willingness to adapt and improve continuously.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this submission in more detail, please do not hesitate to make contact with Campbelltown City Council's Director City Planning and Environment, Mr Jim Baldwin

We look forward to playing an active role and further assisting with this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Lindy Deitz  
**General Manager**