

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 18 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

18 August 2023

Dear Committee Members,

I wish to make the following submission to the Inquiry into pounds in New South Wales which close today 18 August 2023. I wish to focus my submission on the following four issues:

1. The state (i.e. cleanliness, hygiene, amenities) of pounds.
2. The management of pounds.
3. Pound outcomes.
4. Breeding.

1. The state (i.e. cleanliness, hygiene, amenities) of pounds

There is a huge disparity between pounds in the way pounds are maintained and with the amenities available to the animals that come into their care. There are many pounds that do not provide basic heating and cooling. Dogs do not even have basic bedding but are forced to sleep on concrete floors. Some pounds rely on volunteers to provide bedding, blankets, dog coats, etc. This is unacceptable. I recently saw a call out and answer on social media for blankets, towels and other supplies for a rural pound. At least this pound requested assistance from the public, some do not even bother.

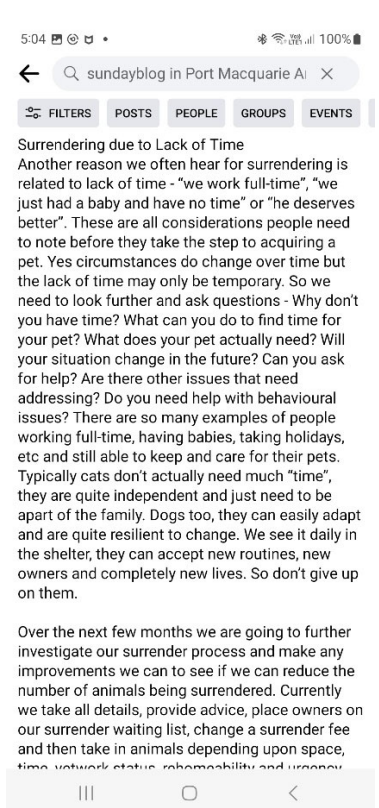
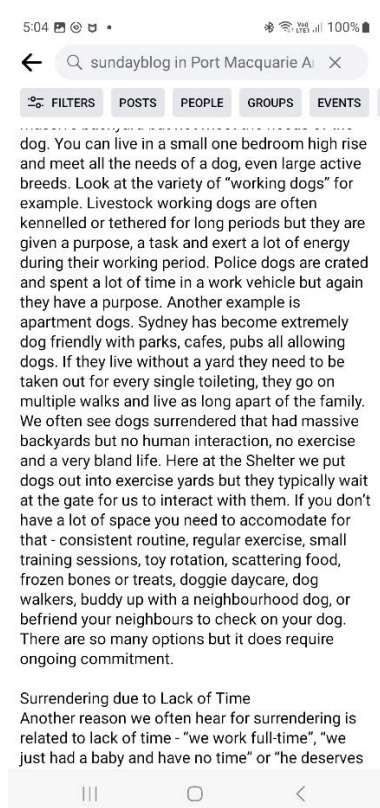
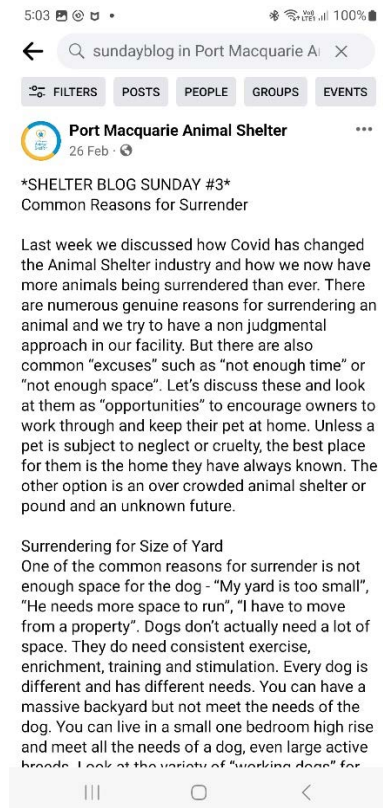


I also recall recently seeing a post where at a rural / regional NSW pound that the dogs are left at the end of Friday and staff do not return to the pound until Monday morning thereby leaving dogs unfed, water not changed and in their own faeces. I do not know the details of this pound and given that it was on social media it may not be true however even the allegation that this could be true is extremely disturbing.

There should be an audit of every pound in NSW as to the state of their kennels and their protocol during and outside of business hours. Every NSW Pound should have the same protocol.

2. The management of pounds

There is a huge disparity between how pounds in NSW are managed. Unfortunately, very few pounds in this State are managed to the high standard that the majority of NSW residents expect. One of the very few pounds that is run to an extremely high standard is the Port Macquarie Animal Shelter. The Council staff at this facility have made major progress (see also reference in 3. below) in all areas since they took over management of the pound from the RSPCA. The staff at this facility go out of their way to not only provide the highest standard of care to the animals that come into the pound but they also go out of their way to provide valuable advice to the community. I encourage the Committee to have an in depth look at the Port Macquarie Animal Shelter Facebook page but here are some examples of how this Shelter is providing advice to its' local community.



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the shelter, they can accept new returns, new owners and completely new lives. So don't give up on them.

Over the next few months we are going to further investigate our surrender process and make any improvements we can to see if we can reduce the number of animals being surrendered. Currently we take all details, provide advice, place owners on our surrender waiting list, change a surrender fee and then take in animals depending upon space, time, network status, rehoming ability and urgency. Unfortunately if we turn away surrenders we are often faced with threats, negativity and abandonment of animals. Legally we aren't required to take surrendered animals. We are a Council impounding facility and our core responsibility is stray or seized animals. We know there is very little options in the area for surrendered animals so we assist when we can.

If you have any comments in general or suggestions to improve our surrender process let us know! 🌟

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SHELTER BLOG SUNDAY #4

Ensuring Microchip Details Are Up To Date

Lately we've had a lot of comments about microchipping and ensuring contact details are up to date so we thought we would dive further into that and explain how it all works. Since the Companion Animal Act came into effect in 1989 it has been compulsory to microchip all cats and dogs from 12 weeks of age or point of sale (this includes if they are given away). Microchipping your pet is very easy and affordable. We provide that service at the Shelter for \$20, vets microchip on a daily basis, RSPCA provide the service as apart of their discounted desexing programs and we will try to have a free or heavily reduced microchipping event this year. Once they are microchipped that 15 digit number should be identified on the NSW Companion Animal Register. The is done by the implanter, vet clinic or council.

So Why Microchip Your Pet?

Firstly, it's the law and you can receive a fine of \$165 if you don't microchip. But secondly and most importantly it links your details to the animal and helps return them home if they are ever lost.

Once they are microchipped and identified, they need be lifetime registered with Council by 6 months of age for dogs and 4 months of age for cats.

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Once they are microchipped and identified, they need be lifetime registered with Council by 6 months of age for dogs and 4 months of age for cats. Registration is reduced if they are desexed or owned by a breeder/pensioner. It is a once off fee paid to Council either in person or online. This cannot be paid at the vet and is different to pedigree registration.

So Why Register Your Pet?

Firstly, again it's the law and you can receive a fine of \$330 if you don't register. Secondly, it is required to be paid before an animal can be released from a pound/shelter. Thirdly, the money from registration is used to maintain the NSW Companion Animal Register and part of the funds goes back to Councils, Pounds and Shelters to operate and provide communities with vital services for companion animals.

Alrighty so your pet is now microchipped, identified and registered on the NSW Companion Animal Register. What's next? Checking or keeping those details up to date.

So Why Update Your Details?

Firstly, it's the law and you can be fined \$165 for not updating. Secondly, it is crucial in ensuring your pet can be returned home to you quickly.

So How Do You Update Details?

There are so many options. Call, email or message us at the Shelter. We can search the register by microchip number or address to check and update immediately.

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So How Do You Update Details?

There are so many options.

- Call, email or message us at the Shelter. We can search the register by microchip number or address to check and update immediately.
- Call or visit any NSW Council, Pound or Animal Shelter. They all have access to the NSW Companion Animal Register.
- Online at <https://www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au/#/>

Did You Know?

There are over 6 companion animal registers in Australia now e.g. Central Animal Records, Australasian Animal Records, Global Micro, PetSafe and Home Safe ID. Majority of these are privately owned registers. In NSW you are required by law to be on the NSW Companion Animal Register. In other states they use different registers and these registers don't "talk" to each other. So if you get an animal from a different state you need to ensure they are put on the NSW Register. This is often forgotten. The breeder will not do this for you. If you don't know, call us and we can search the microchip to check.

It is important to note that vets do not have access to update details on the NSW Companion Animal Register. They can only input data and update their own databases. It is your responsibility to check your pets details are up to date. Do it now. It's easy.

Now we know the majority of people who follow our page are responsible pet owners, we are sharing this information to help educate everyone. So tag your friends, print for your neighbours, share to your social groups. Let's all work together to get details updated to prevent animals for entering Shelters/Pound and if they do, ensuring they get home quickly! 🌟

👍❤️👍 Jackie Tattam and 55 others 20 comments · 27 shares

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SHELTER BLOG SUNDAY #13

Adoption Returns

One of the challenges we have faced since starting our adoption program 2.5 years ago is adoption returns. The typical "pound" may not accept returned animals as they want/need animals out by a certain date and the alternative is euthanasia. Rescue Organisations struggle when animals are returned as they mostly operate with foster carers and once an animal is adopted they quickly fill that spot with another needy... See more

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All pounds in NSW should have the same management practices and I urge the Committee to seriously consider the current management practice of the Port Macquarie Animal Shelter as the role model for all pounds across this State.

In particular:

- no dog that ends up in a Council pound should be shot by a ranger and dumped at the local tip. This practice is abhorrent and should cease immediately;
- the conduct of behaviour assessments by various pounds should be re-assessed by this Committee as a kennel environment can be extremely stressful and cannot give an accurate outcome for many dogs. Too many dogs have been euthanised based on outdated assessment criteria in a stressful environment;
- there are many pounds that will not collect a stray dog outside of business hours. This is unacceptable. That dog may be hit by a car, collected by someone who will abuse it, attack another dog or even attack a human.

3. Pound outcomes

Again, the disparity between the outcomes of the different pounds in NSW is huge. This comes down to management (see above). However, I believe there are two items that can drastically change outcomes for all pounds. These are:

- 1) Microchip / registration details not being up to date.
- 2) No microchip / registration details at all.

With respect to microchip details not being up to date there is one simple answer. Link microchip details to driver licence details. Why cannot this be done easily? Information is currently available through NSW Services and Pet Registry so why can't these services be linked so that as soon as a person's address is updated on their driver licence it is changed in their Pet Registry details? People who care about their animals would not have any problem with this proposal. Those that do have a problem with this information being linked should not have a pet. Why is that a dog can be microchipped but not registered? This process needs to be streamlined so that at the time the microchip is implanted registration details are entered into the system.

There should be an immediate program funded by the State Government that entails a visit to every residence in NSW to check that each and every dog is microchipped and registered. This is a mammoth task but once conducted it should not be needed again. It is also time to stop exempting working dogs from being microchipped. Too many working dogs have fallen off utes, ran away from properties and are not microchipped and cannot be returned to their owner.

There should not be any dog that is not microchipped / registered. Conduct an audit of every pound in NSW and find out exactly how many dogs have come into each facility that is not microchipped at all. That number will be huge. How can this be when the Government introduced changes that any dog being sold / rehomed / bred had to be microchipped?

With respect to pounds outcomes, I again refer to the Port Macquarie Animal Shelter and the transparency they provide to the community (see below). Does every pound do this? If not, why not? Do they have something to hide? Yes, they do. The number of animals being euthanised at pounds is alarming and an audit of each and every pound in NSW should be conducted and the results released to the public. There should be complete transparency in every pound in NSW. These pounds are funded by rate payers and we have a right to know exactly what is going on in each and every pound.



Port Macquarie Animal Shelter

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SUNDAY SHELTER STATISTICS

Over the past few weeks we have been finalising our yearly statistics and these were submitted to the Office of Local Government. This is a requirement of all NSW Council Impounding Facilities and are eventually released to the public through their website. Here at the Shelter we believe in being open, honest and transparent. We have done some comparison for the past 3 years, we took over management from RSPCA on 1 November 2020.

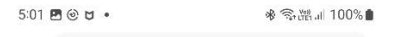
In 2022/23, we impounded 818 animals of which, 35% of cats and 65% were dogs. The incoming animals has slightly increased every year, 2019/20 - 730, 2020/21 - 769, 2021/22 - 788. We are seeing a significant increase in surrender requests, we have had to become more selective and only accept within the Local Government Area. In 2020/21, approximately 25% of incoming animals were surrendered and in 2022/23 that has risen to 38.75%. It is important to note that legally we aren't required to accept surrendered animals unless they are already impounded but recognise there are little options in our area.

Our primary obligation is impounding stray animals



Our primary obligation is impounding stray animals and returning them to their owners. This rate has been slowly declining which is disappointing. Our adoption rate has significantly increased over the past 3 years and the release to rescue rate has decreased. This shows we are actively working with our animals and trying to reduce the strain on volunteer not for profit rescue organisations.

There has been an increase in our euthanasia statistics, however, it is important to note that prior to 2020 the euthanasia rate ranged from 18-25% with much lower incoming animals. In 2020/21 & 2021/22 it was 5.5%. In 2022/23 it has risen to 6.9%. This includes sick/injured animals, feral cats and declared menacing/dangerous dogs. We do try to rehabilitate feral kittens, however, adults are nearly impossible, they are dangerous to staff and keeping them caged is actually a danger to them as well. There has been a significant increase in the number of dog attacks in the last year and subsequently the number of dogs being declared menacing or dangerous. This can be attributed to the "covid crisis" - owners choosing the wrong dog for their lifestyle, lack of socialisation, lack of socialisation, inadequate fencing/housing, separation anxiety and an increase in other behavioural issues. Once a dog has been declared menacing/dangerous they have strict control requirements and the ownership cannot be changed. If an owner does not comply



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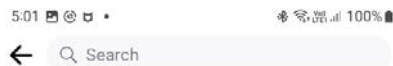
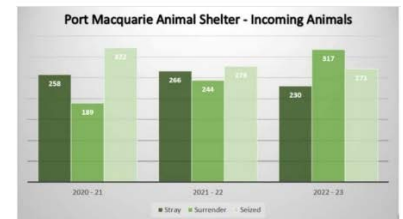
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increase in other behavioural issues. Once a dog has been declared menacing/dangerous they have strict control requirements and the ownership cannot be changed. If an owner does not comply the dog may be seized and the only option is euthanasia. The legislation is very clear and community safety is paramount. We do not euthanise for space and work very hard to continually reduce these statistics. Please refrain from any negative comments about this, we do not hide anything and every euthanasia takes a toll on our caring staff.

We are changing our reporting systems so if there are any other statistics you would like us to explore in the future please comment below. 🌟



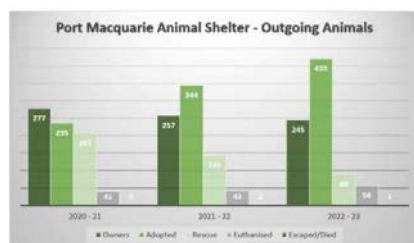
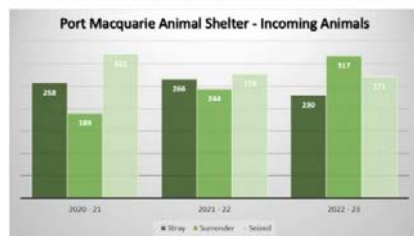
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4. Breeding

The underlying issues that are causing the high number of impounds and those being surrendered / dumped:

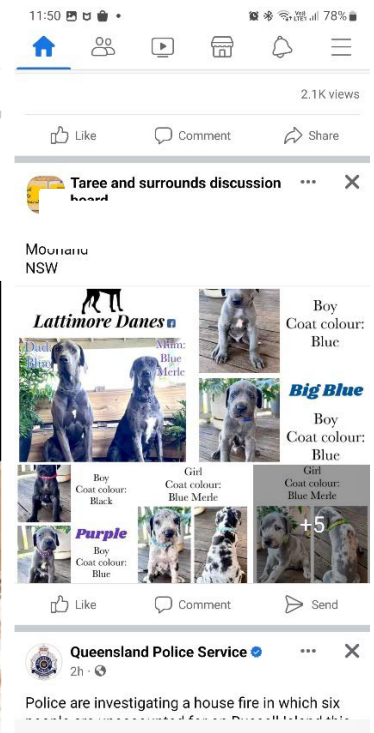
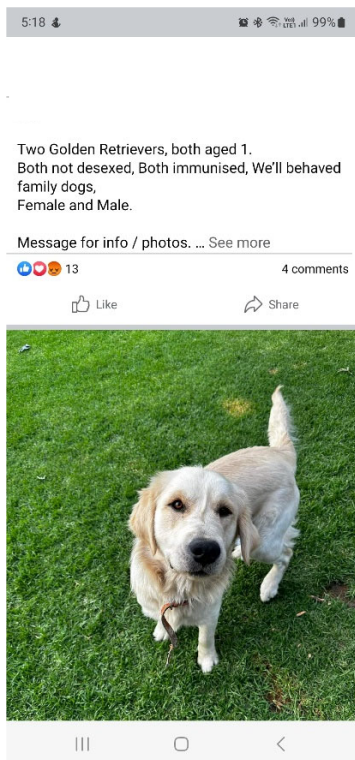
- a) Backyard breeding / puppy farms.
- b) Owners choosing cute little puppies and when they grow up realise they are not so little anymore and they then surrender / dump / abandon them.
- c) Owners not socialising with other dogs / no training.
- d) Housing crisis.

a) Backyard breeding / puppy farms

Backyard breeding and puppy farms need to be banned immediately.

I wish to refer to one particular rescue that has taken place in the past two weeks. Donna White Rescue saved 28 dogs that had been used for breeding, or as a result of breeding, and were living in squalor in a residential premises in Sydney. The idea that it is not illegal to have this many dogs in this small a space and in this condition is abhorrent. What is wrong with our Government that they think this is acceptable? Backyard breeders and puppy farmers do not care about the welfare of the animals – they only care about the money. They sell these dogs without microchipping, without vaccinating, without basic worming. It is despicable and needs to stop. Current laws are not working.





A new category of breeder should be introduced “Registered Ethical Breeder”. A registered ethical breeder should have the following restrictions as a minimum:

- i. No more than 5 (five) breeding females;
- ii. All animals should be treated as members of the family, i.e. they are kept inside, especially at night and not kept in cages / kennels;
- iii. They can only be bred between the ages of two and seven;
- iv. They can only have one litter per year;
- v. After the age of seven they remain a member of the family or they are rehomed through a reputable rescue;
- vi. The breeder is responsible for keeping a record (copy of driver licence at a minimum) of who they have sold each pup to and they must keep these records for a minimum of 15 years;
- vii. The breeder must transfer ownership of each pup within 14 days of sale;
- viii. And they must ensure that the pup is going to a suitable home and provide evidence of how they came to this conclusion.

Any Registered Ethical Breeder not abiding by the above restrictions should be fined a minimum of \$50,000 and they lose their licence.

All other breeding should be banned and any person who breeds a dog and is not a Registered Ethical Breeder is fined \$100,000 and jailed for a minimum of 12 months.

All breeding of cats should be banned immediately. There is enough stray cats and kittens that can be humanely captured, rehabilitated and rehomed.

b) Owners choosing cute little puppies and when they grow up realise they are not so little anymore and they then surrender / dump / abandon them

Too many people are choosing dogs that are not suitable for their home environment. They are choosing puppies when they are cute and when they realise they are too big or not suitable they either surrender them, dump them or give them away for free with no care taken as to where they are going. Anyone that surrenders / dumps / abandons a dog should be banned from owning another dog for at least 5 years. There are extenuating circumstances such as DV situations, however, any exclusion to a ban should be approved by a panel of rescue representatives.

In addition, there seems to be no restriction as to who is adopting / buying dogs, i.e.

How is it a 17 year old needs to rehome her dog? She shouldn't even own a dog.

c) Owners not socialising with other dogs / no training

Too many dogs are being surrendered / given away / dumped and have not been socialised with other dogs and have had no training. This makes it so much harder for a dog to be rehomed. In many of these cases they fail a behavioural assessment and are euthanised. Any owner that has not taken the time to socialise a dog and train it should be banned from owning another dog.

d) Housing crisis

The housing crisis has had a major impact on the amount of people surrendering pets. This is sad for the family involved and the pet involved. We have a housing crisis because of greed. There is not a housing shortage. That is a crap argument peddled by developer and others with vested interests. I live in an area that was heavily impacted by bushfires and floods in 2019, 2020 and 2021. There was a house sold not far from where I live a couple of months before we purchased our property and guess what, it is has never been lived in. If you want to know if we have a housing shortage then have an inquiry into how many families reside in our State and how many houses are in our State. You will soon work out we have more than enough houses for everyone. If you want to make an immediate impact, then ban AirBNB and before anyone says you can't interfere in the housing market, negative gearing is the biggest interference ever created.

I also submit that Gumtree / Facebook advertising needs to be banned immediately and an investigation take place for every dog that has been rehomed through these avenues and other social media sites be commenced and the outcome reported to the public. Where these animals have ended up after being given away for free should be of the utmost concern to the Committee.

I further submit that rescues have been doing the heavy lifting for many years now and it is time that they receive substantial funding from the State Government.

Finally, the RSPCA desexing program is not working. Desexing vouchers for a select minority of the community is not working. With the amount of money that the RSPCA has sitting in the bank it should be offering FULL FREE desexing vouchers to whoever wants them. For example, an elderly friend of mine rescued a kitten two years ago. She is on a pension and got a desexing voucher from AWL (the RSPCA were not offering them in our area at the time) however she still had to pay a gap of about \$100. I paid this for her. How many pensioners can actually afford any gap to get a pet desexed? Not many.

I apologise that I have not given the time to this submission that I wanted to. I have been unwell for some time and I have rushed to get this submission done today and have not given it the attention to detail that I wanted to. I do hope that I have provided enough information for you to consider.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Yours Sincerely,