

**Submission  
No 96**

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

**Name:** Mr Geoff Davidson

**Date Received:** 18 August 2023

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## **Submissions on Inquiry into pounds in New South Wales (2023)**

### **My Background**

I am a resident of Central Coast Council.

I have longstanding interest and experience in animal welfare and the NSW pound system, including:

- I am a veteran dog rescue foster carer, with approx. 700 foster dogs having passed through my household to new homes. And in doing so I have brought dogs come into care from a wide variety of pounds, and various backgrounds and circumstances.
- I am co-founder and Public Officer of Tiki Animal Rescue Inc, a Reg 17c authorised animal rehoming organisation charity
- I am on the executive committee of Socares, a further charity and 17c rehoming organisation which acts as pound operator for one of NSW's highest volume and lowest kill rate council pounds.
- I collect and analyse NSW pound, rescue and shelter performance over the past decade plus, providing that data to inform public debate on animal welfare, and university research. In recent years, OLG has started to publish summary pound data, however my data set is more comprehensive than OLG's published data and was used to supplement gaps in OLG data in the 2022 Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW review.

I believe therefore I have experience of the pound system from multiple angles and am well qualified to comment on these issues.

I am very limited in time as I am away at the moment. However my brief submissions are below. I am happy to provide further information, in writing or in person/video link, if of interest to the Committee,

### **Submissions on 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.

Councils give inadequate priority to resourcing of pounds. It is often treated as analogous to waste disposal, and indeed the pound facilities may be located with the tip.

The council income and spend on animal matters is opaque, with income from animal registration fees and fines and spend on animal pounds, merged in with other items in the financial reports so impossible to determine.

By contrast, the Victorian Know Your Council statistics, while in some ways basic and inferior to NSW statistics gathered on animal pound outcomes, include a cost per population measure on animal management activities, although no granularity. NSW might gather a more detailed version of this data from councils with annual OLG reporting, and/or with Domestic Animal Management Plans. With breakdown of the spend, e.g. between staffing, facilities, vet spend, etc.

Councils also outsource to pressure community groups provide subsidised management, with councils being subsidised

- (b) the adequacy of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales

Many of the pound buildings are inadequate to meet animal welfare standards, including heating/cooling in extreme temperature conditions.

Equally importantly, many council facilities have inadequate holding capacity to cater for holding of dogs and cats past impound period. This leads councils to lean on rescue groups "urgently" to save dogs and cats immediately at end of period, under implied ( or explicit) threat of the animals being killed. For a capacity issue that is of the Council's own making.

An example is Lake Macquarie City Council, which previously outsourced impounding to high-kill operator RSPCA but now has its own facility of extremely limited capacity, which is hardly an improvement.

- (c) welfare challenges facing animals in pounds across New South Wales, including the provision of housing, bedding, feeding, exercise, enrichment, veterinary treatment, vaccination and desexing

Many councils spend next to no effort on enrichment of animals in care, with the animals simply languishing in their runs. Further, veterinary costs are deferred wherever possible, presumably on the basis that it is the owner's responsibility (if reclaimed) or adopter/rescue group.

Rural pounds are often reliant on rescue groups and other charities to provide food supplies, including puppy food.

Failure to provide vet care is an offence under POCTA, yet not enforced against councils.

- (d) the adequacy of the laws, regulations and codes governing New South Wales pounds, including 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 well as the adequacy of the current enforcement and compliance regime .

Other relevant acts are the Impounding Act, and POCTA.

There are serious deficiencies in the regulation of council responsibilities. POCTA is never enforced against councils. Referrals to RSPCA go nowhere.

Further, shooting and other inappropriate euthanasia methods are not banned.

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

- (f) euthanasia rates and practices in New South Wales pounds, including the adequacy of reporting of euthanasia rates and other statistics

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

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

- (i) the challenges associated with the number of homeless cats living in New South Wales for both pounds and animal rescue organisations, and strategies for addressing this issue

- (j) strategies for improving the treatment, care and outcomes for animals in New South Wales pounds

(k) any other related matter.