

**Submission
No 105**

INQUIRY INTO POUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Date Received: 17 August 2023

The NSW State Government's Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service Inquiry: Pounds in NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge my submission on the above Inquiry.

Opening





This is Bellatrix, Fleur, and three puppies who were rescued by D.A.R.E. from Bourke Shire Council pound earlier this year. When the D.A.R.E. rescuers arrived, they found the animals cowering in their pens, with some severely underweight and covered in faecal matter. They witnessed the council worker hosing down the pens along with Fleur. After the rescuers took the animals to the vet, they found most were suffering from the debilitating and deadly parvovirus, and had been denied any vet care from the pound employees. – Animal Liberation, August, 2023

Introduction

Euthanasia in pounds and shelters is the leading cause of death for companion animals in NSW? In 2022, over 6,500 animals were killed in NSW pounds and most were healthy and simply in need of the chance for a new home.

The current NSW pound and shelter system continues to actively enable the killing of impounded animals, with little to no public transparency or accountability, despite the availability of many evidence-based and life-saving programs designed to stop the killing and suffering.

The case for urgent and comprehensive, in-depth, and meaningful reform right across the NSW pound and shelter system.

Just two, brief examples:

1a Rescue dogs shot dead by NSW council due to COVID-19 restrictions

This was published 1 year ago (2022)– Sydney Morning Herald

Several impounded dogs due to be rescued by a shelter have instead been shot dead by a rural council in NSW under its interpretation of COVID-19 restrictions, alarming animal activists and prompting a government probe.

Bourke Shire Council, in the state's north-west, killed the dogs to prevent volunteers at a Cobar-based animal shelter from travelling to pick up the animals last week, according to council's watchdog, the Office of Local Government.

- <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/rescue-dogs-shot-dead-by-nsw-council-due-to-covid-19-restrictions-20210821-p58ksh.html>

1b “The Rescue Dogs That Were Shockingly Killed In NSW And The Broken Shelter System”

The tragic news that **15 dogs**, including **10 puppies**, were killed last week by the [Bourke Shire Council](#) in [New South Wales, Australia](#), shocked the world.



[Lauren Lewis](#) August 27, 2021

<https://worldanimalnews.com/wan-exclusive-with-animal-liberation-about-the-rescue-dogs-that-were-killed-in-nsw-so-that-their-caretakers-would-not-spread-covid-19/>

2 “Infamous NSW dog pound hit with more cruelty allegations” 9:20am, May 14, 2023

“Too weak to stand

Each pen lacked blankets or bedding and four of the five adult dogs were very thin and weak. A two-year-old border collie named Fleur, in the pound for three weeks, was unable to stand and lay in her own waste after she and another dog were hosed down in their joint pen, the volunteers allege.

A ranger allegedly dragged Fleur and the three other adult dogs from the pens to the volunteers’ van on a slip lead, which tightens around the animal’s neck as it is pulled.

Bellatrix, a five-month-old cattle dog cross, refused to walk and lay on her back when leashed. That prompted the ranger to drag her to the van as she squealed, according to the volunteers’ account.

The ranger then tried to lift Bellatrix into the van “purely by the slip lead around her throat like a noose”, their complaint to the council says.”

- <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/state/nsw/2023/05/14/cruelty-claims-nsw-dog-pound/>

Closing

There is absolutely nothing in the current system that would prevent these actions (along with countless other callous and cruel treatments inflicted daily on blameless, homeless animals) from happening again.

I strongly urge the NSW Government to acknowledge the urgent need for investigation, review and change, including:

Introducing a fully funded, mandatory and legally enforceable NSW pound and shelter ‘duty of care’ regime which focuses on proactive life-saving initiatives and solutions, and best practice animal welfare outcomes, rather than killing and disposal;

End the currently unacceptable treatment and neglect of homeless and vulnerable impounded animals under NSW’s traditional animal pound and shelter model, which manages animals under ‘waste management’ or ‘feral pest management’ policies, focusing on disposal rather than care, rehoming and adoption;

Immediately halt all NSW pound and shelter shooting and discontinue all 'euthanasia' methods apart from intravenous injection for compassionate reasons;

Immediately end all pound and shelter 'euthanasia' procedures being undertaken by anyone apart from qualified and licensed veterinary practitioners;

Urgently conduct a public online survey (~8 weeks) to engage the community and harness a broad range of views and expectations about the management of NSW pounds and shelters;

Publicly exhibit (for ~4 weeks) a tailored, stand-alone Code of Practice for all impounded animals in NSW pounds and shelters;

Carrying out comprehensive and independent audits of:

- all NSW impounding facilities to identify the level of compliance/non-compliance and
- all NSW impounding practices, procedures, policies, and;
- actual 'no kill' performance.
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Introducing mandatory Local Government Council Strategic Companion Animal Management Plans ('SCAMPs') with attached policies and KPI's to enable ongoing 4 yearly 'local' public consultation periods, reviews and improvements in line with evolving public expectations.

Enacting a 'No Kill' Bill or sweeping changes to POCTAA to include all impounded animals (of all species) and outlaw the killing of otherwise healthy homeless animals. These reforms must incorporate the full suite of No Kill programs and principles as mandatory, which, when combined, form a highly effective life-saving plan;

Substantially overhaul the Companion Animals Act to include a revised focus on all impounded animals, regardless of species;

Establishing a new OLG NSW Pound and Shelter Reform website, including an online complaint form and 1800 'hotline' tailored specifically for public pound and shelter complaints and concerns;

Enhancing inspection and enforcement powers for agencies authorised under POCTAA to undertake routine NSW pound and shelter inspections and enforcement;

Conducting a comprehensive review and overhaul of the NSW Companion Animals Fund, including an assessment of evidenced outcomes and how it is distributed and managed;

Introducing an annual grants program for NSW not-for-profits, including self-funded and volunteer rescue, rehoming and advocacy organisations;

Introducing NSW pound and shelter initiatives to support vulnerable or at-risk animal owners or caregivers during periods of intense need, in order to keep animals in homes and ensure the welfare and wellbeing of both humans and animals. This should include those experiencing:

- Financial stress, homelessness or are at risk of homelessness;
- Domestic violence;
- Emergency management incidents (e.g., bushfires and floods) and;
- Physical or mental health issues, including hospital stays or other medical needs.

Yours faithfully,

Cheryl Forrest-Smith