

**Submission  
No 54**

**INQUIRY INTO 2025 INQUIRY INTO THE OPERATION OF  
THE APPROVED CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS UNDER  
THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT 1979**

**Name:** Geoff Davidson

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## **Submissions on Inquiry into operation of Approved Charitable Organisations pounds under POCTA - New South Wales (2025)**

### **My Background**

I am a resident of NSW.

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. 700-800+ 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 a Reg 17c authorised animal rehoming organisation charity
- I am on the executive committee of a further charity and 17c rehoming organisation which acts as pound operator for one of NSW's highest volume and low 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. This includes the Financials and Annual Reports of the shelter organisations, and RSPCA NSW in particular. 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 animal welfare system from multiple angles and am well qualified to comment.

I am very limited in time due to work commitments. However, my brief submissions are below. I am happy to provide further information, if of interest to the Committee.

### **Submissions on terms of reference**

(a) the matters contained in the annual reports of the approved charitable organisations, including their financial statements.

#### *Reporting*

The annual reporting of the approved charitable organisation groups, and the information contained therein, is very much up to discretion of the charitable organisations themselves, which typically present limited, favourable information in a glossy brochure format more akin to advertising. Timing is also fluid, with RSPCA NSW only publishing its 2024/25 Annual Report late November. (Its Financial Report was published earlier)

There is no mandated form of animal statistics information required, nor indeed a requirement to publish or report information at all concerning animal outcomes. In contrast to the community 17c rescue groups, all volunteers, which have only one month from end of financial year to provided a detailed, mandated reporting format to OLG. There is no clear reason why RSPCA and AWL – with paid staff - are exempted from this.

While RSPCA Australia eventually publishes animal statistics for all RSPCA state branches, the format of that information does not mesh with the NSW pound and rescue data I obtain via GIPA each year. Meaning that a picture of companion animal flows and

interaction between the pounds, the approved charitable organisations and 17c rescue groups is not possible. All because RSPCA NSW and AWL NSW are given special status and not required to report.

### *Results*

RSPCA NSW has drastically reduced its intakes over the past decade+. Dog intakes are down by 80%, and cat intakes by two thirds, compared to 10 years ago. And while much of this reduction comes from the CAA activities rather than the POCTA ones, RSPCA NSW dog kill rates at 39% of non-reclaimed dogs are much higher than the NSW council pound average (including remote rural ones).

So, animals entering RSPCA NSW have an unacceptably high chance of not surviving. Including those coming in via inspectorate activities.

RSPCA is very selective about taking in surrenders, telling most that there is a long waiting list (so, in effect, 'go elsewhere').

AWL NSW traditionally had better practices and lower kill rates than RSPCA NSW. But has been reticent (or worse) to make its animal statistics available, or when it has done so in the current year, scatters the figures amongst narrative so it is more difficult to find and extract.

### *RSPCA Financials*

After years of prominent public fundraising on basis of 'we only get 2% of our income from government' (which was misleading as it was receiving council funds), RSPCA NSW reports \$17 million in government grant receipts for 2024/25.

It has made a cumulative \$81 million in profit over the past 15 years, largely by crying poor to donors and to government (notably the 2011 threat to withdraw animal welfare services from the Sydney region for a claimed 'lack of funds' – see e.g. <https://www.smh.com.au/business/nsw-is-a-doggie-death-row-20151211-gll7ep.html> , and similar "urgent" appeals for funds since), and consistently fundraising more than it spends on the animals. Much of this surplus has been held in investments, mostly in stocks. As of 30 June 2024, it had \$77 million in cash and investments.

RSPCA NSW received \$17 million from taxpayers in 2024/25. And \$46 million in fundraising, public donations and bequests.

Unusually, RSPCA NSW reported a loss of \$3.1 million for the 2025 Financial Year. But this was due to a \$5.6 million loss on its investments exceeding a \$2.4 million in operating surplus. In a year where sharemarkets were volatile, but overall positive, this requires explanation as the money lost was originally accumulated from the public and government.

(b) the exercise by the approved charitable organisations of their compliance and enforcement functions under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979, and

Despite having more than adequate funds reserves, RSPCA NSW closed its cruelty reporting hotline and directed the public to other organisations, due to "finite resources". (Noting also that RSPCA had similarly previously closed its shelters to cat intake for scarcity of vaccines and pushed them onto rescues and pounds, who were expected to somehow source the vaccines that RSPCA couldn't).

Referring to the RSPCA Australia National Statistics 2023/24, RSPCA NSW conducted only 210 routine inspections, covering the following:

- Abattoirs
- Aquariums
- Breeding establishments
- Circuses
- Feedlots
- Guard dog firms
- Intensive farms
- Kennels
- Livestock vessels
- Markets
- Pet shops
- Poultry farms
- Pounds
- Riding schools
- Rodeos
- Saleyards
- Scientific establishments
- Shelters
- Shows
- Tourist parks
- Zoos

Although those are 2023/24 figures, 210 inspections covering breeding establishments, zoos, abattoirs, intensive farms, etc in NSW over a whole year confirm that minimal routine inspection is being conducted. From a (redacted) team of 39 inspectors listed in its Inspectorate Report, that's less than one a month each. Hardly going to strike fear into the hearts of puppy farmers and shonky operators of animal establishments to make them do the right thing.

I note that the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate Report for 2024/25 claims not to have capacity to distinguish routine inspections, yet RSPCA NSW has provided this information to RSPCA Australia in previous years. The disparity requires explanation.

In the inspectorate report, RSPCA NSW claims it is simply 'too busy' to do its job.

All of this supports – plus the inherent conflicts of interest - the view that it is simply not appropriate to have unaccountable charitable organisations conduct investigation prosecution of crimes.

(c) any other related matter.

I will file further submissions if time permits

**Geoff Davidson**