

SUBMISSION TO:

TASMANIA FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL 2023

RSPCA TASMANIA



OVERVIEW

The RSPCA Tasmania appreciates this opportunity to comment on the structure of the vital services that provide relief to our communities during times of hardship. The comments within this short document will highlight some of the relevant issues that the RSPCA Tasmania feel must be addressed if this bill is to ensure the welfare of all Tasmanians and their animals.

The RSPCA Tasmania looks forward to open communication between enforcement agencies and urges that this opportunity for legislative reform to be maximized in the impact it can have for Tasmania.

Recommendations

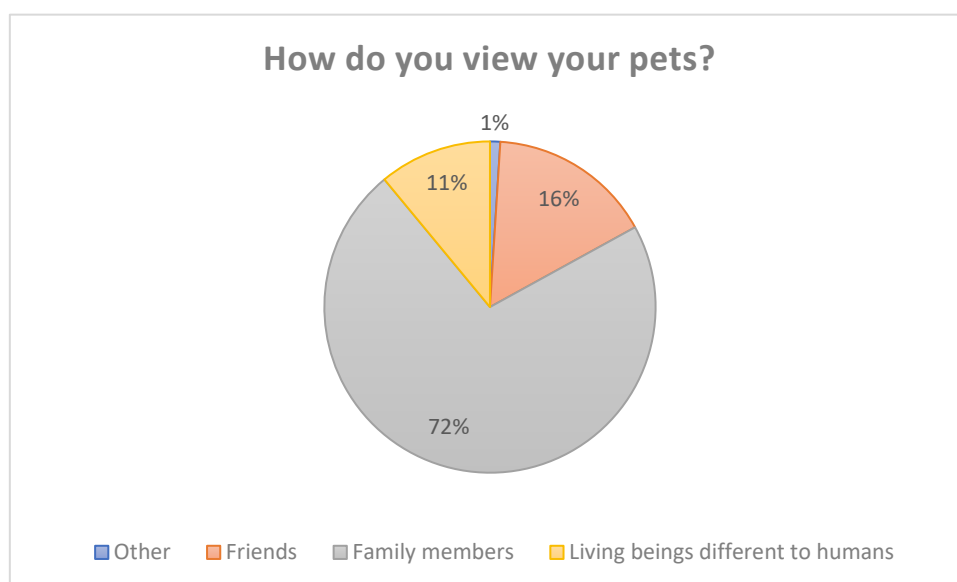
- **It is requested that s 9(1)(a) of the bill be amended to recognise the need to preserve animal life.**
- **It is requested that the RSPCA Tasmania be provided access to the TasGRN to allow for communication between enforcement bodies during issues of concern to animal welfare.**
- **The RSPCA Tasmania requests for further funding to be provided broadly to ensure the sustainability of the below services presently offered largely based upon community donations:**
 - **The administrative task of redirecting calls regarding animal welfare to other emergency service agencies, especially during emergencies.**
 - **Advocacy campaigns around emergency services (Safe Beds, Ready Pet Go etc.)**

COMMENTS ON THE BILL

Objectives of TFES

Animals: objects or family?

As can be seen in Graph 1.0, animals are considered part of the family by the vast majority of Australians¹:



Graph 1.0 How animals are viewed²

Further, in the same Australian study it was found that over a third of respondents to a 2006 study stated that they allowed their pets into children's bedrooms, over half allowed animals into their own bedrooms, close to 80% allowed pets into lounge and family areas, over 60% allowed animals into kitchens and meal rooms, and around half of the respondents let animals onto furniture³.

The below was stated in relation to the significance of animals being allowed in these areas:

"The symbolism of household space needs to be emphasised here. Bedrooms are largely highly private spaces, the inner sanctum of privatized societies. Partners, close friends and siblings and other close family members form the restricted group of intimates using bedrooms together. So, in this sense when people in our survey stated that an animal was both a member of the family and allowed into their bedroom, it was a refined answer indicating that they were not just a member of the family but a close intimate member ... [I]n the past when dogs were kept outside in a separate house, or when they were allowed inside but not on furniture, their separate, inferior status was being marked.

¹ Geeta Shyam, "Is the Classification of Animals as Property Consistent with Modern Community Attitudes?" *University of New South Wales Law Journal* 41, no. 4 (November 2018).

² Ibid

³ Geeta Shyam, "Is the Classification of Animals as Property Consistent with Modern Community Attitudes?" *University of New South Wales Law Journal* 41, no. 4 (November 2018), 1436-1437.

To discover that half of those interviewed allowed their animals on furniture is to uncover a major shift in their status and position relative to humans and human society.”⁴

Therefore, it is requested that s 9(1) of the bill be amended as follows to properly recognise this transition towards animals being considered as an invaluable aspect of the Tasmanian family.

...

9. Objectives of TFES

(1) The TFES has the following objectives:

- (a) to preserve human life and to protect animals, property and premises if an emergency event occurs;

...

It is requested that s 9(1)(a) of the bill be amended to recognise the need to preserve animal life.

TasGRN

Ensuring welfare across Tasmania

The RSPCA Tasmania is supportive of the move towards a single radio network for use across Tasmanian government agencies. Whilst TasGRN was not explicitly mentioned in the bill, it appears prudent to provide a comment on this vital issue in relation to our organisation.

The RSPCA Tasmania presently works in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to ensure the welfare of wildlife in Tasmania. Further, we collaborate with the Tasmanian Police to ensure that all members of a family are cared for. The recent grant to the RSPCA Tasmania was in part to facilitate the development of communications between enforcement agencies through the drafting of MOUs. However, the RSPCA Tasmania wishes to open a dialogue about our inspectors, as legislatively recognised under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, having access to the TasGRN. Whilst the RSPCA Tasmania is not a government agency, it does share some similarities in relation to its legislative duties as required by Parliament. It therefore appears counterproductive to place impediments in the way of effective and efficient communication.

It is requested that the RSPCA Tasmania be provided access to the TasGRN to allow for communication between enforcement bodies during issues of concern to animal welfare.

⁴ Adrian Franklin, *Animal Nation: The True Story of Animals and Australia* (University of New South Wales Press, 2006), 211-212.

Funding for services

The RSPCA Tasmania's recent campaign into emergency preparations for Tasmanian households has proven immensely successful in the connection made with the community. This is primarily due to two factors: one being the awareness and trust in our brand, and two being the increasing importance the average Tasmanian family is placing upon animal welfare (as discussed above). However, our advocacy efforts within this area go largely unfunded with the result being an operational instability that threatens to impact our ability to ensure animal welfare across the state.

This addresses a broader issue that is not to be limited to the present bill, but the RSPCA Tasmania cannot accept the increasing responsibility that is placed upon our organisation unless there is a proportionate increase in funding. We are a not-for-profit that is largely driven by tireless and passionate people who work within this industry out of a desire to benefit their community. The RSPCA Tasmania works alongside emergency services, we are on the front line of helping our community, and there is no place our staff would rather be, but in order to maximise the impact of our work, and by extension the welfare of animals and people across Tasmania, further funding is needed.

The RSPCA Tasmania requests for further funding to be provided broadly to ensure the sustainability of the below services presently offered largely based upon community donations:

- **The administrative task of redirecting calls regarding animal welfare to other emergency service agencies, especially during emergencies.**
- **Advocacy campaigns around emergency services (Safe Beds, Ready Pet Go etc.)**

THE RSPCA TASMANIA

Who we are

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Tasmania (RSPCA) is a not-for-profit non-government organisation. We have been working to improve the welfare of animals within our state since 1878.

Tasmania has a unique affinity with its animals and the RSPCA Tasmania has become an embedded part of our state's culture with 77% of those aware of our organisation reporting a high level of brand confidence. We are the only Tasmanian organisation to be explicitly named in animal welfare legislation and our long history of effective cooperation has allowed us to work with all manner of stakeholders, from charities to government, towards the benefit of animals.

We recognise that connections with the community are vital to furthering welfare reform and so vast amounts of resources are used on maintaining and developing our connection with the Tasmanian community; In a 2023 survey from Kantar commissioned by the RSPCA Tasmania, of those aware of the RSPCA Tasmania, 82% report that they feel positive about us, whereas only 4% reported feeling negative. Our efforts within animal welfare advocacy have been recognised by the community with 84% of people believing that we care and 78% agreeing that we are effective in our efforts. Further, 77% reported a high level of trust towards our organisation. This metric stands as a testament to our dedicated commitment to building relationships with the community and ensuring we are improving Tasmania's level of animal welfare towards contemporary community expectations.

During the past three years, the RSPCA Tasmania has:

- Investigated over 25,000 reports of animal cruelty;
- Provided care for more than 6,670 animals;
- Delivered information to thousands of Tasmanians through online resources, community engagement and the recent addition of our AWARE program that is being rolled out this year to teach children about the importance of animal welfare.
- Helped our state Government push through further amendments to the Animal Welfare Act 1993.

Of those that feel negative towards our organisation, the vast majority of these issues can be linked to a lack of resources. One of the key issues we are pushing for is a level of government funding that reflects our contribution and the quantity of services rendered to the community. In our Kantar Brand Perception Survey, the majority of negative comments related to a lack of response following cruelty reports. Our inspectors work tirelessly to answer reports, and whilst **all reports are responded to**, the time frame this occurs in could be drastically reduced through further funding.

Our key services for the Tasmanian community have been recognised as pet adoption, investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty and neglect, and educating owners on caring for their pets. Further, our services have become an integral part of Tasmania's animal welfare with 75% of the

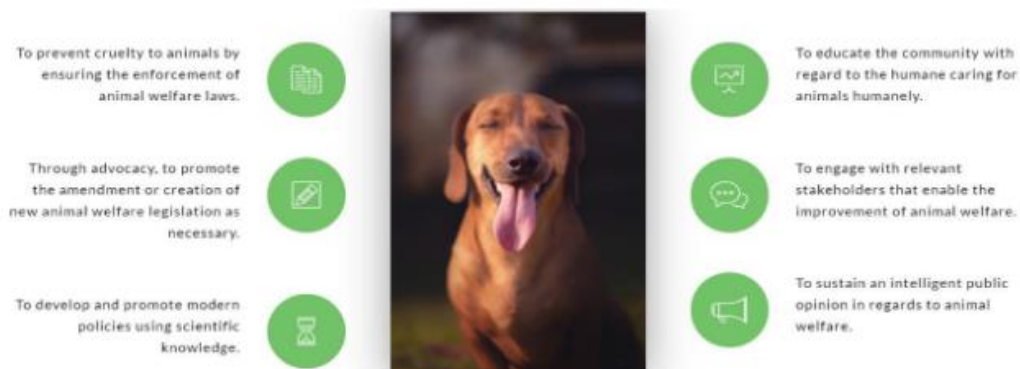
Tasmanian public aware of our investigation and prosecution services and roughly the same amount of people stating they were using our services or would do so in future.

We're not just here to serve Tasmanian animals, but we're here to serve the Tasmanian community and the animals that form an invaluable part of our state.

What we do

Our strategic priorities are built on the pillars of Animals, Sustainability, and Our People. Within that framework we aim to:

- Constantly push for economic efficiency to maximise the use of our resources.
- Achieve the best welfare outcome for every animal in our care – through adopting socially conscious sheltering principles, improving the capability of our facilities, and increasing adoptions and foster care arrangements.
- Reduce animal cruelty and neglect – through advocacy that delivers legislative change, and community education that improves awareness and welfare outcomes.
- Reduce the number of surrendered and homeless animals – through increased desexing and microchipping programs, and providing support to people in difficult circumstances
- Support our people to do their great work – by building an exceptional workplace culture, and a dedicated network of foster carers, volunteers, and animal specialists.



How we work

- Our Animal Care Centre (ACC) at Devonport is dedicated to caring for, rehabilitating and rehoming animals.
- Our Adoption and Retail Centres (ARCs) in Latrobe, Launceston, and Hobart are our bases in the community. Animals are surrendered and rehomed through these centres; owners can access advice and supplies for their companion animals; and our ARC teams assist with local microchipping and education activities in their communities.
- Our Inspectorate operates under delegated powers from the state government to investigate and prosecute instances of alleged animal cruelty. Inspectors are co-located with NRE in Hobart, Launceston, and Devonport, and operate across the state. This team is supported by a call centre equipped to handle reports.
- Our team of dedicated volunteers assists in all our activities. They serve on our board; they care for animals in our ACC and ARCs; they organise fundraising events; and they support us in many other activities. We could not do what we do without these wonderful people.
- Our corporate office is in Launceston. Supporting our frontline teams, a group of dedicated professionals work across many areas – including fundraising and marketing, policy and advocacy, volunteer organisation, project delivery and – last but not least – our administration team who answer the phones and keep the lights on.