

Securing the RSPCA's Front-line Animal Welfare Service Capability

Submission for Funding

December 2023



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1. OVERVIEW

RSPCA Tasmania is a not-for-profit animal welfare organisation that was founded in 1878. Since Tasmania first introduced laws to protect animal welfare and prohibit cruelty, RSPCA has supported the Tasmanian government to enforce them. RSPCA Tasmania is the state's most trusted animal welfare organisation and is responsible for assessing the majority of animal cruelty reports made in this state.

Through an annual service level agreement (SLA), the RSPCA is authorised by the Tasmanian government to undertake compliance activities related to animal welfare legislation. Under this agreement, we deliver a vital community service investigating and prosecuting cases of animal cruelty, providing community education about best-practice animal welfare, and caring for many animals every year that have nowhere else to go, sometimes for the duration of protracted court cases that can last months or even years.

The number of cruelty reports is increasing each year as the Tasmanian population grows. This is added to as the value placed by the community on the importance of animal welfare continues to expand. The ubiquity of smart phones and social media too are leading to increasing propensity to report suspected animal welfare issues.

The most consistent story we've been hearing across the community over the past year has been the effect the increasing cost of living is having on people. RSPCA Tasmania is also seeing the impact of these changing circumstances in our work caring for vulnerable animals.

We're also seeing increasing demand from the community for assistance in caring for companion animals in situations of domestic violence and where cost of living pressures are forcing families to make hard decisions about their ability to continue to care for family pets.

Added to that have been expectations from the government – and the wider community – that we will be involved in a range of issues outside those considered core in our service agreement. These include the racing industry, cat management, and (more recently) livestock management in abattoirs.

At the same time, stagnant funding, unprecedented demand, increased costs, reduced donations, reduced revenue from social enterprises, and lower levels of volunteering have stretched our resources to breaking point.

According to work done recently by TASCROSS, indexation for many Tasmanian government-funded services has been stagnant at 2.25% for 20 years, barring a stop-gap increase to 3% for the current financial year. Many organisations are reporting that their sustainability is increasingly in jeopardy as costs outrun funding. In real terms, funding is going backwards.

And the situation is even worse for RSPCA Tasmania, as our annual funding was not increased – or even indexed – from 2018 until the current financial year (FY23). This has meant that, in order to meet government and community expectations, the RSPCA has been required to subsidise the inspectorate service from other fundraising and philanthropic donations. In an environment where all charitable fundraising is declining, this is no longer tenable.

Most importantly, concerns about the mental health and physical safety of inspectors must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Stronger legal requirements relating to workplace health and safety for frontline inspectors are not negotiable. Not only are legal requirements changing, but so too are acceptable practices to ensure safety in risky front-line first-responder roles. Almost without exception, government enforcement agencies now recognise these risks and make provision for personnel to work in pairs (ie attend jobs two-up).

Recognising our legal (and moral) responsibilities as an employer, we will be left with no option but to reduce the scope and scale of our activities without a significant increase in funding.

The state government must commit to further investment to meet both its own responsibilities and growing community expectations around animal welfare. As part of our ongoing partnership with the Tasmanian Government, the RSPCA has thus prepared this submission to request an increase in funding.

2. SUPPORTING IMPROVED ANIMAL WELFARE OUTCOMES

Agencies involved in dealing with animal welfare complaints

Responsibilities for dealing with reports received to the Animal Cruelty Hotline are shared across several agencies as follows:

- RSPCA: companion and domestic animals; and non-commercial (hobby farm) livestock
- Biosecurity Tasmania (DNRE): commercial livestock
- Police: bestiality, livestock theft
- Local government: animals at large (strays); barking dogs
- DNRE: wildlife; and invasive species (eg feral cats, rabbits, ducks/geese, peacocks)
- Office of Racing Integrity: racing horses and greyhounds.

The majority of complaints are dealt with by the RSPCA.

The RSPCA's role in supporting improved animal welfare outcomes

The RSPCA's role as an enforcement agency is governed by an annual service level agreement (SLA) with the state government through the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This sets out the role of our Inspectorate in delivering compliance and enforcement activities related to the Animal Welfare Act 1993 and other related Acts and Regulations.

The services we deliver directly as a requirement of our SLA include:

- **Inspectorate:** Investigation, intervention and enforcement activities by inspectors in response to cruelty complaints.
- **Contact Centre:** The national Contact Centre operated under contract by RSPCA Queensland receives cruelty complaints from members of the public via a number of channels, assesses information, and allocates jobs to the Inspectorate or other agencies as appropriate. All cruelty complaints in Tasmania are handled initially through the Contact Centre and, after initial assessment, directed to the relevant enforcement agency.

However, we also provide many services in support of our enforcement role at no cost to the government. These activities are funded through our general fundraising and philanthropic resources, and include:

- **Partnerships:** Working with other enforcement and support agencies to address animal welfare issues which are often outside the funded scope in our service level agreement with the state government eg issues in the greyhound and harness racing industries, animal welfare standards within abattoirs, support for people with diminished capacity to look after their companion animals etc.
- **Shelter Services:** Our Animal Care Centre (ACC) and two Adoption and Retail Centres (ARCs) cared for approximately 1,800 animals per year. Lost, abandoned, and seized animals that end up in a shelter are often afraid and in poor health. Our team works tirelessly to rehabilitate and rehome as many of these animals as possible.
- **Advocacy:** Supporting government policy development and issues management activity through participation in the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC), and taskforces to address issues such as proposed changes to the Animal Welfare (Dog) Regulations 2016, animal welfare in abattoirs etc.
- **Education:** Our education team contributes to prevention strategies by providing face-to-face and virtual sessions to promote awareness of animal welfare and key elements of responsible pet ownership in line with the current legislation.
- **Community Outreach:** Our outreach team provides support for the pets of victims of family violence, and people facing other emergency situations, including unexpected medical circumstances and homelessness. We're also expanding our capacity to provide support for pet owners in the case of natural disasters eg fires and floods.
- **Corporate Support:** The central services of the RSPCA mainly consist of legal and compliance, finance, information services, people and culture, facilities and infrastructure.

These areas provide services to the operational functions of the RSPCA and account for approximately 12% of the aggregate support costs.

In an organisation as small as ours, separate accounting for these overhead costs would not be cost-effective. A corporate cost recovery charge to support these functions is thus included in the financial accounting for the inspectorate (and other projects) to ensure the central corporate services are able to sustainably support regulatory functions and operational requirements.

What our inspectors do

- During 2022, 2108 reports were taken by the RSPCA 24-Hour Animal Cruelty Hotline. Over that period, our team of 4.2 investigators made a total of 3,456 site visits.
- RSPCA inspectors will always assist animal owners or caregivers where they can. However, there are times when further enforcement action is necessary or surrender of the animal is the best outcome for the owner and pet.
- Officers accepted and collected over 100 animals as a result of them being surrendered or straying. In addition to those, a total of 87 animals were seized to ensure their ongoing care, in accordance with section 17 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.
- During the year, inspectors sent 55 warning letters, issued one infringement notice, and laid 19 charges against a total of 11 defendants. In total, 8 matters against a total of 10 defendants were successfully finalised in court, all of which had charges proven against them. One of these charges dated back to June 2019, which gives an indication of how long it can take for matters to be resolved through the court process.
- Most charges, 18 in total, were in relation to cruelty to animals, by the omission of a duty or the doing of an act, which RSPCA proved caused unreasonable or unjustified pain or suffering to an animal or animals. One charge related to the use of a method of management on the animal which was reasonably likely to result in unreasonable and unjustified pain or suffering to a horse. Six additional charges related to continuing offences.
- One defendant made an appeal to the Supreme Court against the conviction awarded in the magistrate's court. The RSPCA successfully upheld the appeal.
- The largest fine issued was \$5000; sentences included a 2-month jail sentence, suspended for 2 years; and 84 hours of community service.

Challenges our inspectors face

- Lack of funding indexation and the short-term nature of the SLA impact on stability and confidence, with serious consequences on staff safety, morale, effectiveness, and efficiency. A key example is the present inability to fund inspectors to work in pairs (two-up). To do so presently would halve our reach across the state with drastic impacts on animal welfare enforcement
- Lack of communication between the RSPCA Inspectorate and other frontline services. The current failure to effectively communicate is damaging to all enforcement agencies in terms of results and brand reputation.
- The current funding arrangement actively prevents the enforcement of legislation against large-scale operations due to the inability to handle the care for high quantities of animals if they are surrendered.
- Effective delivery of improved animal welfare outcomes must be based upon adequate and contemporary legislation, sufficiently resourced enforcement in the field, and sufficiently resourced enforcement in the courts. Tasmania is presently failing in all three of these requirements.

3. RSPCA INSPECTORATE SCORECARD

Financial situation

From 2018, the state government has provided core annual funding of \$550,000 (excluding GST) for this service. However, this amount remained unchanged until FY23, when we received a one-off payment of \$50,000 to upgrade safety equipment for inspectors, and a further \$50,000 to bring the Inspectorate into the Comtrac prosecution system, in line with other agencies working in the animal welfare space.

In the current financial year (FY24), core funding was increased to \$700,000.

Funding under the SLA remained static at \$550,000 annually over the period FY18 – FY23, without even taking into account CPI increases, just to maintain services at the same level as in 2018 would require a 21% increase in real funding ie to \$675,000.

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024*	FY2025*
Annual CPI % (RBA)	1.91	1.61	0.85	2.86	6.62	7.15	3.60	3.00
Inflation adjusted \$ to simply maintain services at 2018 levels	\$560,505	\$569,529	\$574,370	\$590,797	\$629,908	\$674,946	\$699,244	\$720,221

Figure 1: CPI impacts, 2018-2023

Whilst funding from government has remained static over the past 6 years, the total costs of delivering Inspectorate services have continued to rise.

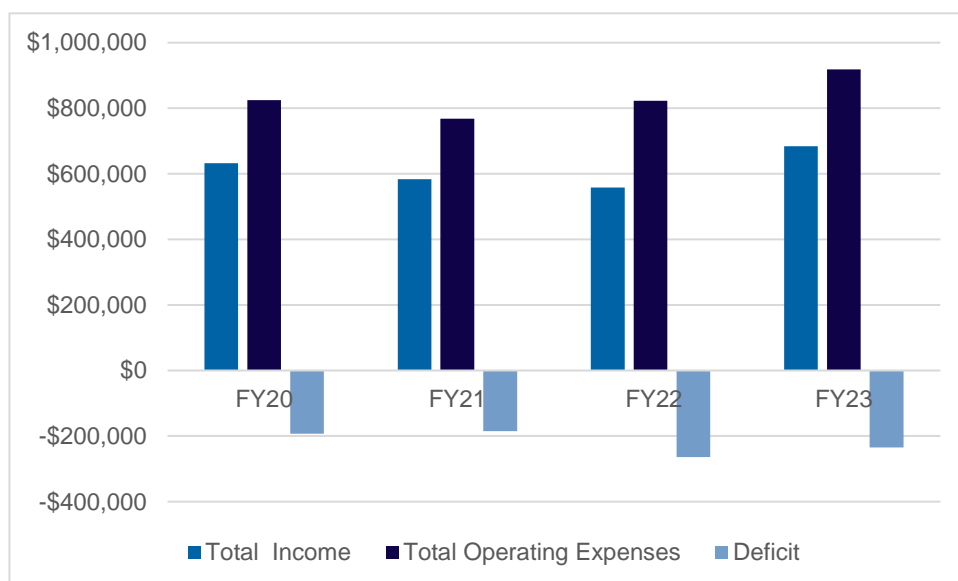


Figure 2: Costs of providing Inspectorate services FY20 – FY23

As can be seen in the figure above, this has resulted in an annual deficit which has been funded from the RSPCA’s own resources. In an environment where philanthropic fundraising and charitable donations have been rapidly falling, this has been a difficult task.

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Deficit	-\$192,277	-\$185,274	-\$263,756	-\$234,920

Figure 3: RSPCA-funded deficit for Inspectorate services FY20 – FY23

As result, the activities covered by the SLA funding have by necessity diminished over that time. This has resulted in the SLA funding covering not much more than the salary costs of the inspectorate for the period FY20 – FY23. With the deficit forecast to rise to more than \$500,000 in FY24, this is no longer sustainable.

Detailed financial information for the period FY20 – FY2023, can be found at Appendix A. This also includes forecasts for the end of FY24.

The increased workload (outlined below) has placed unsustainable stresses on our inspectorate team. This was compounded by resignations and an inspector taking 12 months maternity leave.

This loss of experienced officers was clearly exacerbating the situation, so a decision was made to increase staffing levels in FY24 to recognise the time taken to recruit new team members and for these recruits to become authorised and hence fully operational.

Whilst very welcome (and long overdue), it is clear that the increase in SLA funding from \$550,000 to \$700,000 in FY24 will not even keep pace with escalating people costs.

	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	Budget FY24
People Costs	\$ 490,021	\$ 448,878	\$ 481,064	\$ 490,021	\$ 719,707
% SLA funding	89.09%	81.61%	87.47%	89.09%	103%

Figure 4: People costs as a per cent of SLA funding, FY18 – FY24

Performance measures

As the vast majority of Tasmanian reports received by the Animal Cruelty Hotline each year are handled by the RSPCA, this trend has also seen the number of complaints managed by the RSPCA more than double.

Over past four years, the number of complaints received by the Animal Cruelty Hotline has more than doubled from c1110 to 2662 (c140% increase). At the same time, the number of inspectors funded within the SLA remained relatively unchanged.

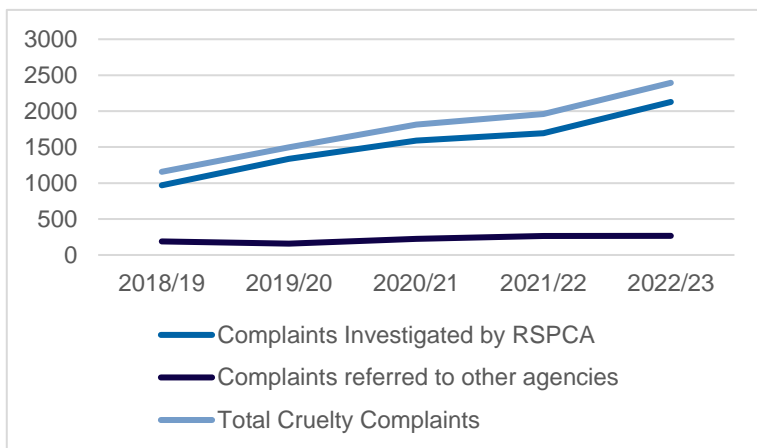


Figure 5: Reports to Animal Cruelty Hotline, 2018-2023

During FY23, our Inspectorate covered vast areas of the state on a regular basis. The team was most active in and around the major cities (Hobart and Launceston), with the activity more widely dispersed in the north west and north east. Many of these locations are in lower socio-economic areas of the state and in areas which are regionally isolated.

With just 4.5 inspectors on the ground, individual inspectors travelled huge distances, often from one end of the state to the other in one day. For example on one day recently, an inspector made a round trip from Devonport and back, via Prospect, Tunbridge, Spreyton, and Burnie.

That's a total of just over 500 kilometres, with a minimum driving time of 6 hours (assuming limited delays with roadworks) plus stops at each location to deal with investigations.

On the basis of the amount of driving alone, this is not a safe work environment – and the risks are heightened with unknown situations presenting at each of the jobs.

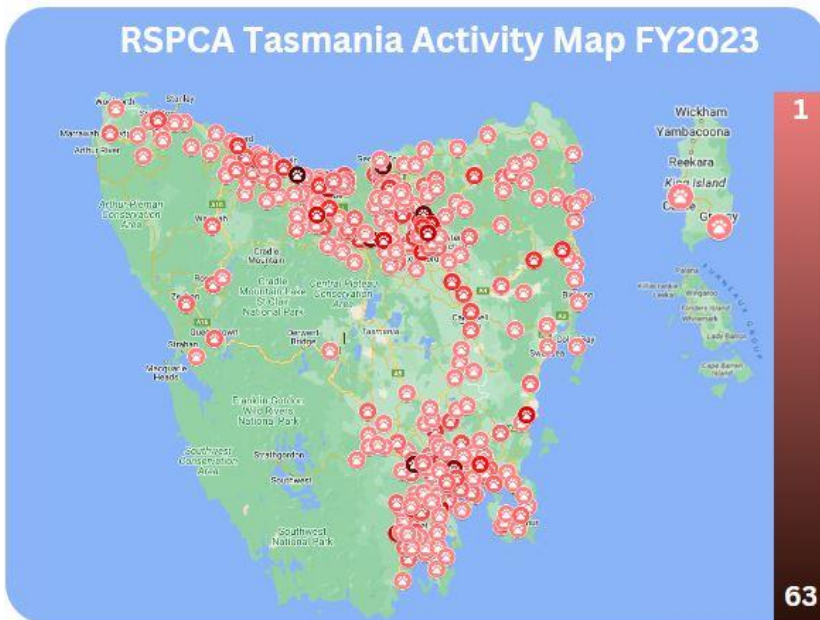


Figure 6: Location of Inspectorate activities, FY23

There were a number of hot spot locations across the state, where clusters of reports were received and/or repeated interactions were required. Once again, the majority of these locations are in lower socio-economic areas of the state and in areas which are regionally isolated.

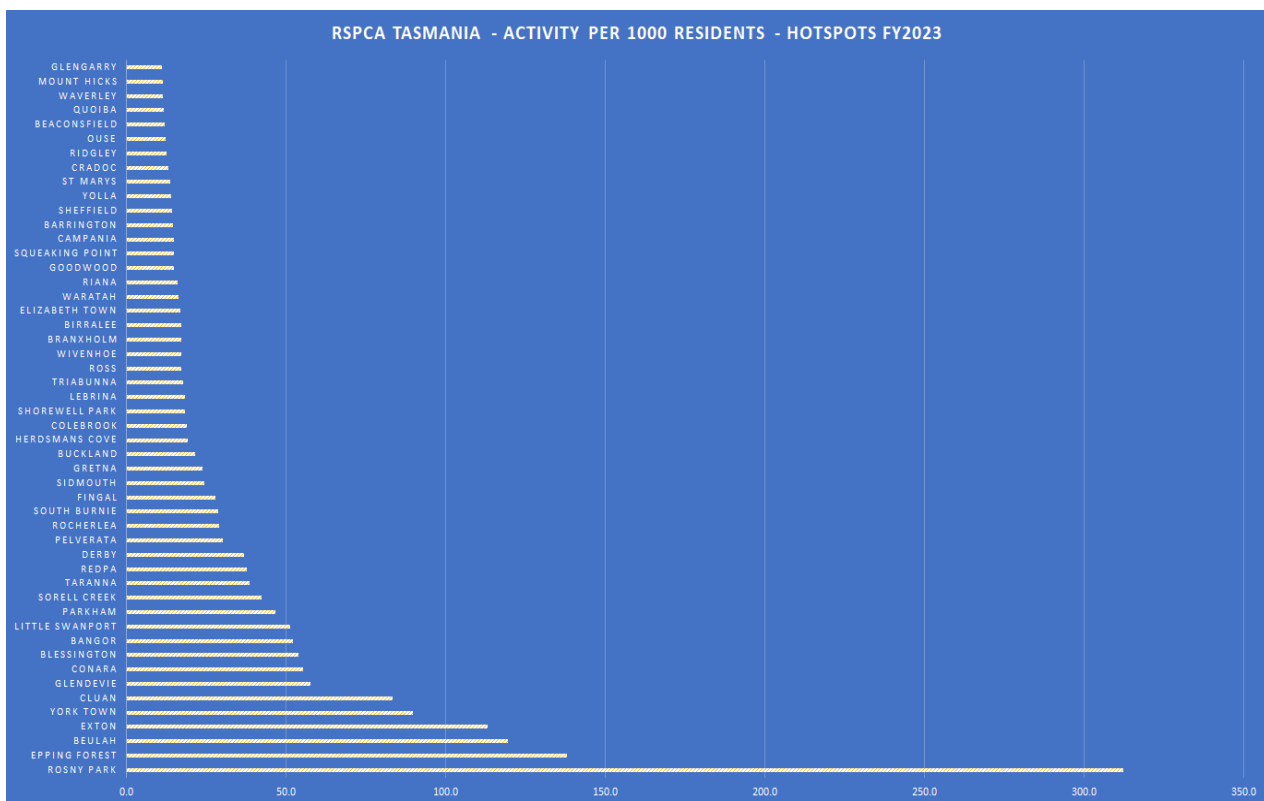


Figure 7: Activity by suburb per 1000 residents, FY23

There are definite annual peaks and troughs in the numbers of reports received, and in the animals involved in these reports. The largest peak is in January, as 'kitten season' impacts figures.

The impacts of COVID-19 can be seen in the figure below. Reports received in January 2023 were the highest on record, with a subsequent monthly record also seen in May 2023.

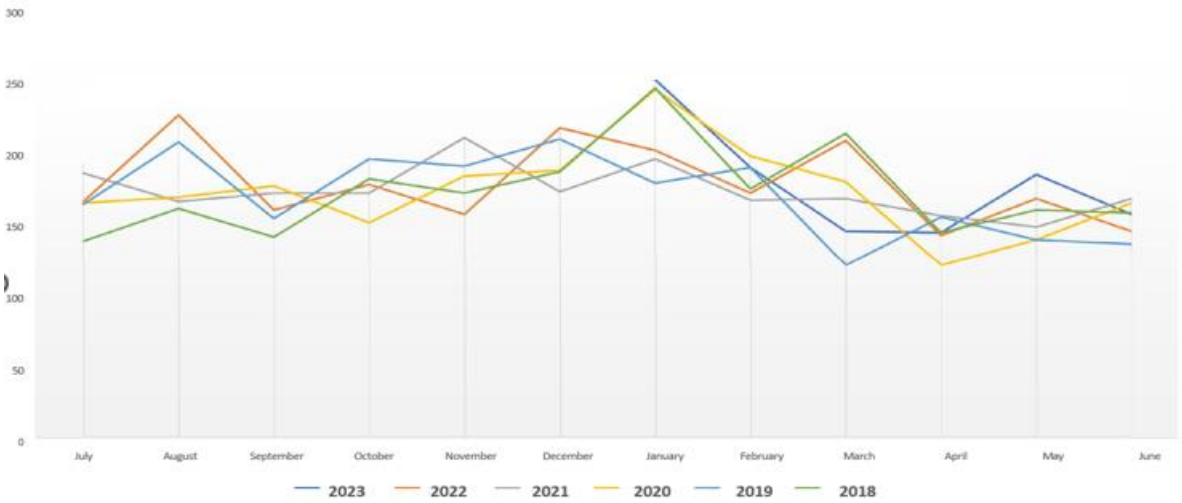


Figure 8: Cruelty complaints received by month, F2018 - 2023

The vast majority of animal welfare complaints in Tasmania concern dogs, followed by cats, sheep, and horses.

SPECIES INVOLVED IN INDIVIDUAL REPORTS 2022-23

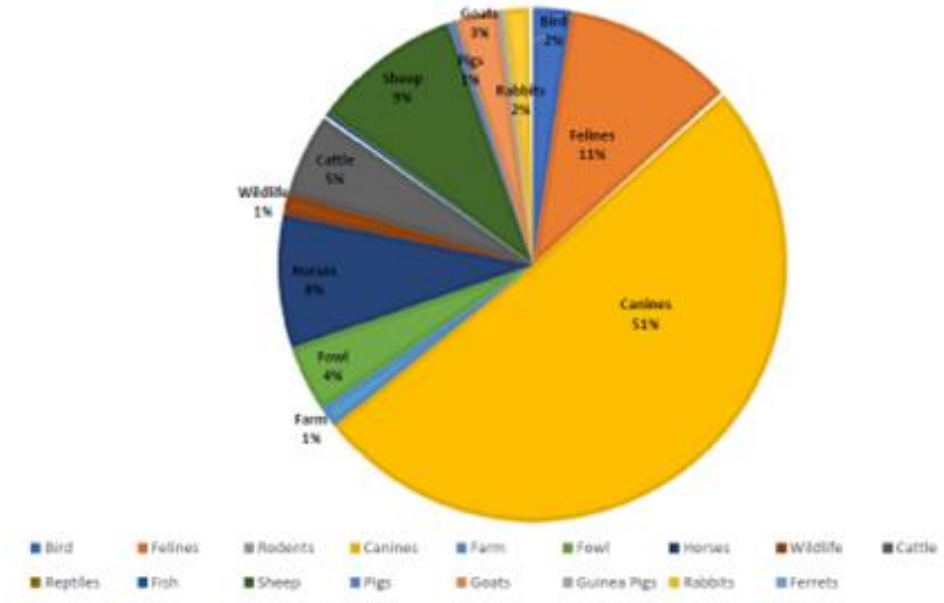


Figure 9: Reports to Cruelty Hotline by species, FY23

As previously noted, the number of inspectors funded within the SLA envelope has remained relatively unchanged over recent years.

A comparison of activity across the RSPCA Inspectorates nationally for FY23 shows that the rate of complaints per head of population in Tasmania was higher than the national average at (3.72 as compared with 2.23).

With just 2.15% of the population, our team:

- investigated 3.61% of complaints received nationally by the Animal Cruelty Hotline;
- undertook 4.09% of enforcement activities;
- completed 6.23% of routine inspections; and
- transferred a higher proportion of complaints into enforcement activities (5.36% as compared with the national average of 4.48%).

	TAS	ACT	NSW	QLD	SA	VIC	WA	Total	Tas % total
Cruelty complaints									
Investigated	2,128	5,571	13,883	15,165	4,489	10,561	7,126	58,923	3.61%
Complaints per 1000 people	3.72	11.93	1.66	2.78	2.42	1.55	2.48	2.23	
Enforcement activities									
Prosecutions finalised	9	1	108	17	29	58	32	254	3.54%
Successful prosecutions	9	3	107	14	21	58	29	241	3.73%
Charges laid	84	3	420	490	98	193	183	1471	5.71%
People charged	7	1	420	21	33	58	35	575	1.22%
Cases pending	5	14	58	28	25	53	63	246	2.03%
Total Enforcement Activities	114	22	1113	570	206	420	342	2787	4.09%
Routine inspections	22	10	272	0	2	47	0	353	6.23%
Enforcement Activities as % Complaints	5.36%	0.39%	8.02%	3.76%	4.59%	3.98%	4.80%	4.73%	av 4.48%
# Population	572,800	466,800	8,339,300	5,459,400	1,851,700	6,812,500	2,878,600	26,381,100	+ NT = 252,500
% Population	2.15%	1.75%	31.31%	20.50%	6.95%	25.58%	10.81%	99.05%	+ NT = 0.95%

Figure 10: Complaints and enforcement activities RSPCA nationally, FY23

From this data, it is clear the Tasmanian Inspectorate is punching above its weight. However, this level of workload is simply unsustainable at the individual level.

The continuing upward trend in complaints received with fixed resources means the workload for individual inspectors has more than doubled over the last four years. This has resulted in an unmanageable workload for our inspectors.

The national average caseload for RSPCA inspectors in FY23 was 372. On average, our inspectors were responsible for 420 investigations each ie 14% more than the national average. This is simply not sustainable.

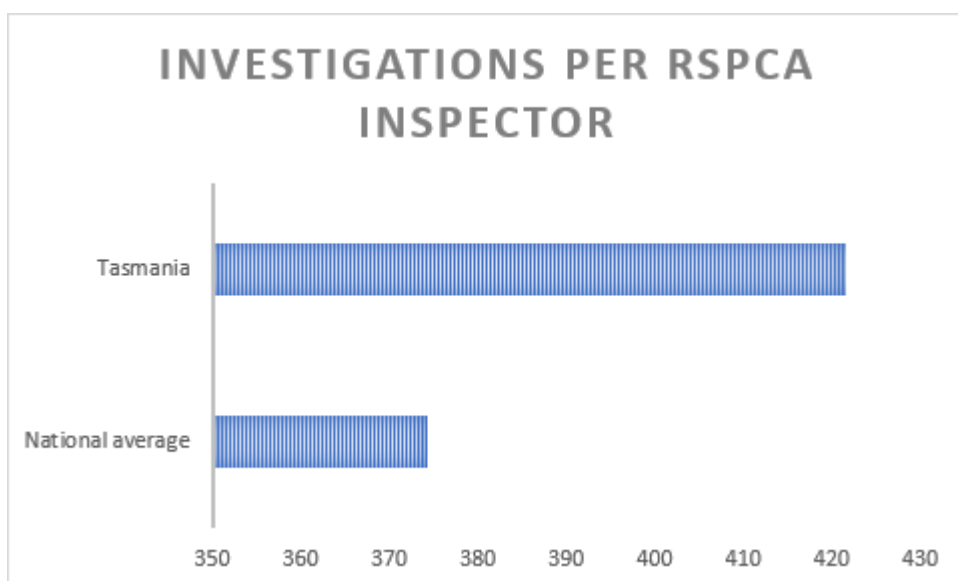


Figure 11: Investigations per Inspector nationally FY23

Outcomes from Inspectorate activities have been impacted by the effects of COVID-19. Backlogs in court have resulted in much slower finalisation of matters which have been prosecuted. Restrictions on travel and in-person interactions skewed the outcomes to warning letters, as inspectors found it difficult to actually attend and investigate in situ.

As a result, there has been an increase in warning letters sent in comparison to charges laid. It is anticipated that this imbalance will be turned around in future years.

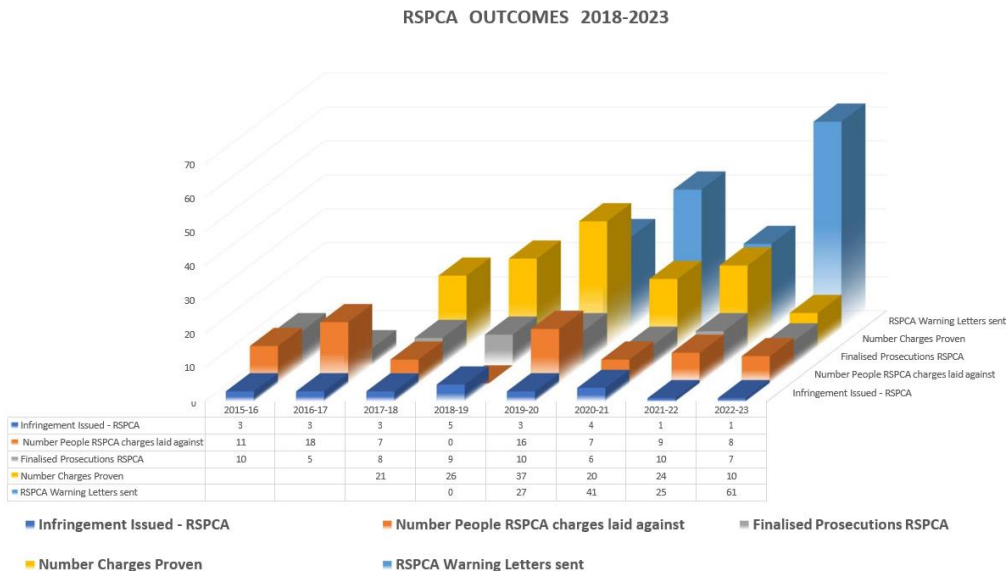


Figure 12: Enforcement Activities for Tasmania 2018 – 2023

In the main, prosecutions undertaken by the RSPCA relate to dogs.

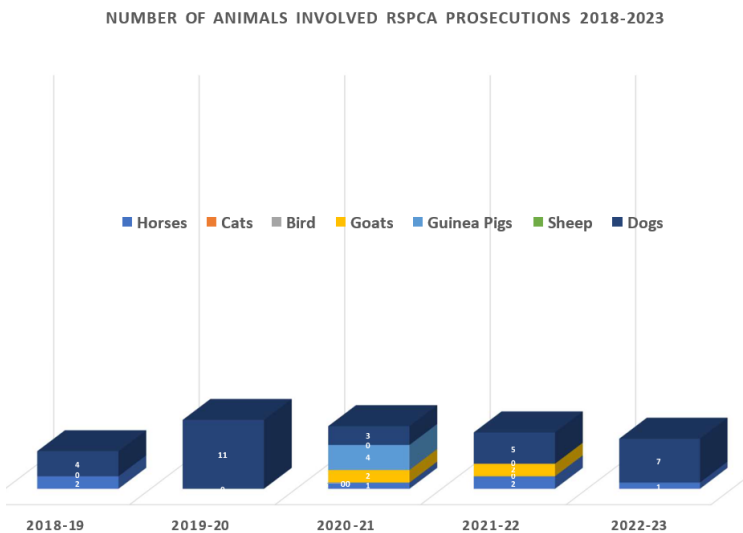


Figure 11: Number of animals involved in prosecutions, 2018 – 2023

The failure of funding to keep pace with both real costs and the expectations of the government and the community has had significant impacts on our ability to deliver services outside a very narrow interpretation of the SLA. This means we’ve had to focus on actual cruelty complaints for domestic and companion animals, at the expense of education and compliance activities.

Other areas seen as in scope of the SLA and the associated Administrative Guidelines but not core have thus not been able to be serviced.

These include compliance activities for:

- racing industry codes (greyhounds, harness, thoroughbred);
- zoos, wildlife parks, circuses, rodeos;
- breeding and boarding facilities;
- online sales of pets;
- stray and abandoned animals;
- unowned injured animals;
- low order welfare issues eg barking dogs, housing standards, tethering etc; and
- cat management activities.

There is an increasing propensity for the RSPCA to be called in to assist in situations that are not part of our agreed remit.

We've been closely involved in situations arising from distressing animal welfare failures in the harness and greyhound racing industries. The welfare of racing animals is in the first instance the responsibility of the Office of Racing Integrity. Whilst we are obviously willing to co-operate in these situations, the involvement of our inspectors is at the expense of their prime focus on companion animals.

The current situation with appalling cruelty in abattoirs is another example. The welfare of commercial livestock is the responsibility of Biosecurity Tasmania. Yet we've been requested to be part of a task force to address this issue. Of course, we will participate in this process – but it is outside our funding agreement.

Frustratingly, the implementation of the Cat Management Act 2009 has raised community (and government) expectations about what the RSPCA will do. Without any funding support, the resultant burden on our limited financial, human and physical resources is not tenable. Our best estimate is that meeting these services cost the organisation in excess of \$100,000 in FY23. Not only can we not continue that level of funding, if we were to continue to meet these expectations, we would need to make a significant investment in new facilities as our current Spreyton shelter simply does not have the capacity to cope with additional accommodation demand.

4. WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Background

The role of the RSPCA in enforcing animal welfare legislation was summarised by Magistrate D.J. in a 2015 case of animal cruelty in Victoria:

“The RSPCA in particular is a statutory body with prosecutorial powers but without significant support from Parliament. They are also the body charged with rescuing and rehabilitating these animals. This comes at a significant cost for an organisation that receives some state funding but otherwise relies on donations and bequests and other fundraising activities.”¹

Whilst the role in delivering animal welfare services is strongly supported by the broader public, a number of issues have emerged due to the novel arrangement of having a not-for-profit charitable private body enforcing legislation.

The current level of funding

RSPCA Tasmania is grateful for the funding support it receives from the Tasmanian government to deliver animal welfare investigation and compliance activities.

It is abundantly clear that the current level of funding is insufficient to enable us to deliver even a basic level of service. The risks that inadequate funding highlight are serious and unavoidable.

Without a substantial increase in funding, we will need to carefully consider our capacity to provide Inspectorate services in the current form.

Options for ensuring financial sustainability are explored in a later section of this submission.

However, funding is not the only issue that poses challenges.

Increasing costs

- Despite parallels in law enforcement responsibility and contribution to community welfare, the RSPCA is in a unique position being one of, if not the only, law enforcement agency that does not employ two-up operating procedures. This is standard operating procedure for other law enforcement agencies and is long overdue for the RSPCA inspectors to ensure their safety and wellbeing.
- Costs of caring for and rehabilitating animals have increased for two key reasons: the types of animals that are coming in via the Inspectorate; and the growing cost of goods and services required to care for these animals.

The cost of veterinary services is increasingly rapidly as a result of an international shortage of vets and increasing demand. RSPCA Tasmania does not have its own vet at present, and so is forced to compete in the commercial market for services. This often means delays in treatment that result in extended stays. It also means that we cannot access discounts on pharmaceuticals and other goods that are available to the RSPCA because we must access these through commercial vets.

It is important to note that in the past the RSPCA has often absorbed the costs of medications, consumables, pathology and veterinary labour in the care of Inspectorate animals. However, funding pressures require increasingly detailed management of expenditure, and this has highlighted the need to accurately attribute these costs to obtain the true cost of caring for Inspectorate animals and to make more informed decisions about care options.

- The recent JBWere NAB Charitable Giving Index (Aug 2023) noted that the combination of recent challenges (including COVID and interest rate rises) has resulted in an increase of just 7% in the

¹ Neil Comrie, “Independent Review of the RSPCA Victoria Inspectorate,” 2016, https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/4a4d49/contentassets/9261c3b0237746839ca7f6730d1c5c6c/rspca_independantreview_final.pdf.

Charitable Giving Index over the four years to December 2022, well below the inflation rate. It was also noted that much philanthropic support has moved from animal welfare to human health issues.

The RSPCA has experienced a static performance of its general fundraising program of only 3% year-on-year growth for FY23, with similar levels of giving forecasted for this year.

- RSPCA's volunteer numbers declined drastically over the height of the COVID-19 period and have not fully recovered since. This means many tasks previously undertaken by volunteers now require paid staff.
- Reduction in purchasing power, as the cost of goods and services continue to rise. This has meant that the RSPCA has needed to allocate more costs towards maintaining the same quality and reach of services.
- Reputational risks are increasing. The RSPCA is held responsible for any issues related to animal welfare, and therefore needs to be adequately funded to manage such risks. The RSPCA is also held responsible for inaction by the community even when the expectations are outside our remit. The growing reach of social media and the inability to manage misinformation heightens this risk.
- Financial risks are also often outside our control. The RSPCA is responsible for the costs related to seizures of large numbers of animals, infrastructure such as holding facilities, legal and other costs, over which it has limited control.

As a result of these pressures, the RSPCA recorded a deficit in FY23 of around \$800,000.

Despite the widening gap in fundraising and expenditure for the reasons outlined above, the RSPCA has not wavered in its commitment to meeting community expectations. Having said that, deficits in that order are not sustainable.

Other issues

The SLA and associated Administrative Guidelines underpinning this funding tranche are deficient in several respects:

- The scope of responsibilities and both community and government expectations with respect to delivery of services have continued to increase, even though funding has not risen and overall costs have grown significantly. The Administrative Guidelines include a range of responsibilities which we have not been able to address in the past – and will certainly not be able to address in the future without significant funding increases. This is fine when we all turn a blind eye and proceed on the tacit acknowledgement that some aspects of the agreement will not be called into effect. However, should people or circumstances change, a laissez-faire approach could quickly turn to black letter enforcement.
- The SLA is an annual agreement with no indexation provision. As almost all of the funding provided under the agreement is committed to actual salaries, this uncertainty does not allow for forward planning or efficient use of resources. A person with the skills required to fill an inspectorate role will not be attracted to a position with a one-year term.
- The SLA mandates that the RSPCA employ six inspectors at all times. Yet the funding provided is insufficient to cover salaries and on-costs for six employees at that level, let alone provide and maintain vehicles, safety equipment, and other support systems and services.
- The task of enforcing animal welfare legislation poses a myriad of dangers for our inspectors. This is to the case for all enforcement agencies and the reality of this is reflected in the common practice for personnel to operate in pairs ('two-up').

However, the SLA requires the RSPCA to accept all responsibility for death, injury, or other consequences of the Inspectorate function. This is not something we can in all conscience do, when almost all agencies now require front-facing team members to work in pairs. The funding provided for the Inspectorate is insufficient to enable this to happen.

If the two-up system were to be introduced, even on a limited basis, then the effectiveness and reach of our services would be significantly constrained.

In the 2022 Fuller Report into the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate, it was noted that a failure to make provision for inspectors to work in pairs is a hazard for the health and safety of inspectors.

Recognising this risk, the NSW government effectively doubled funding for the RSPCA Inspectorate to enable inspectors to work two-up.

Other RSPCA organisations are now being forced to make decisions between compliance capabilities and employee safety. This is an inappropriate and unacceptable decision to be forced upon any employer and their employees, let alone a charity operating on behalf of government in the enforcement of legislation.

We should not be forced to accept liability for known risks that are not within our capacity to control. This is a contractual service delivery relationship with the state government – and there are no other circumstances where the government could expect a contractor to deliver a service at a price which does not permit compliance with all legal requirements and standards.

- Various clauses within the SLA require refund of any unspent funds should the agreement be terminated. As funds are directed to salaries, this is not possible.

The RSPCA must meet legal employment responsibilities including accrued leave, periods of notice, superannuation payments etc. Funds must be held to cover these future eventualities even if the agreement were to be terminated.

- As a not-for-profit charitable organisation, the RSPCA operates within finite and very limited financial resources. In this respect, it is different from other bodies that are responsible for commencing summary public prosecutions, such as Tasmania Police or DNRET.

Although budget limitations restrict all prosecuting authorities, government agencies operate with a degree of security knowing that ultimately any significant costs incurred in relation to a particular matter will be covered by the state government. The RSPCA does not enjoy that same comfort.

A defendant will not be denied costs simply because the RSPCA is a benevolent, not-for-profit organisation engaging in public interest litigation. In fact, costs awarded against the RSPCA in pursuing welfare prosecutions must be funded from organisational fundraising efforts – and this is an unacceptable risk.

A further complication arises from the fact that, in an increasing litigious society, defendants may choose to launch civil proceedings, seeking *in detinue* costs against the RSPCA itself; and potentially also criminal charges personally against inspectors and veterinarians who work for the society, for actions undertaken during the course of their employment.

Clearly, without the support or guarantee of government backing, financial constraints may potentially have a very real impact on the exercise of prosecutorial discretion. Quite simply, the RSPCA may have to choose not to proceed with a prosecution of a worthy case if the risks of an adverse finding and costs would unduly affect the organisation's financial position.

The RSPCA therefore proposes that the government provide a guarantee to underwrite costs above a certain level are awarded against RSPCA or where civil actions are instigated in relation to prosecution cases or seizure of animals under animal welfare legislation.

- There is also no recognition of the significant financial burden large or lengthy prosecutions could impose on the organisation. In some cases, animals can be in care for long periods of time.

Some years ago, c80 cattle were seized and held in our care for more than 4 years while actions were pursued in court.

While some costs were later clawed back, this placed a significant financial burden on the organisation, as well as the facility constraints such a large long-term seizure imposed. In a recently finalised case, a dog was in care for more than 3 years. Over that time, the RSPCA was responsible for all his accommodation and veterinary costs, as well as providing enrichment and socialisation experiences. In another inspectorate case, extensive medical issues for a seized dog resulted in veterinary bills of more than \$5,000.

Whilst we can make claims to recoup these costs from the defendants, there is no guarantee that we will receive the funds at all – let alone in a timely manner.

We seek an agreement to underwrite costs above an agreed level or which extend over long periods of time (eg seizure of perhaps 100+ dogs from the current prosecution of a major puppy farm; or the requirement to rehome large numbers of greyhounds if the leading trainer currently facing a lifetime ban is unsuccessful in his challenge of this penalty).

5. FUNDING MODELS

Business as usual is not an option

The cost of enforcing Tasmania's *Animal Welfare Act 1993* and associated legislation and regulations is rising, due to a range of factors.

This means that the RSPCA's capacity to enforce compliance reactively, let alone proactively improve compliance, is reducing, because of static funding and increasing costs.

This was recognised by the Tasmanian government as far back as 2013 when the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts found that the level of funding to the RSPCA to run the Inspectorate service was inadequate given government expectations of the organisation. The Inquiry noted then that the RSPCA was bearing the cost of administering government legislation and was not being sufficiently remunerated for the cost of doing so.

This finding has been echoed by subsequent inquiries in other states eg the Fuller review of the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate Service in 2022. In that instance, however, the state government heeded the warning and effectively doubled the funding provided to RSPCA NSW earlier this year.

The RSPCA does not believe that any charity should have any responsibility for funding enforcement of government legislation. We consider the current SLA to be an outsourcing contract for the state government through the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The RSPCA provides this service to government at a much lower cost than government would incur in providing a similar level of services internally, and certainly considerably less than the cost of any private company providing a comparable level of service.

Governments are charged with providing services required by the community, and there is a clear expectation by the Tasmanian public that more, not less, needs to be done to protect animals in this state. It is not realistic to expect a charitable organisation to be subsidising public services.

The implicit assumption underpinning the government's approach to this SLA is that the RSPCA will continue to provide significant funding subsidies to ensure the Inspectorate meets the targets set out in the agreement. Whilst the RSPCA is prepared to make some funding contribution to support delivery of Inspectorate services, this is at the board's discretion, and there should not be an assumption that the level of support in any period is a given.

Factors that must be considered in developing costed funding options include:

- The urgent need to implement a staged two-up model to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our Inspectorate workforce;
- Increasing difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled staff in rural and regional areas mean there is strong competition for competent candidates. As well, salaries are increasing with award wages expected to factor in CPI; workers compensation insurance premiums have increased by 15% in each of the past two years; and statutory superannuation requirements will rise to 11.5% from 1 July 2024;
- Increasing costs of basic operational requirements eg power, fuel etc;
- The need to replace and upgrade equipment including motor vehicles, PPE and safety equipment, phones, and computers;
- Our Spreyton shelter is nearing the end of its useful life and needs significant investment for upgrading and/or replacing existing facilities.

In other states, the RSPCA has received capital funding from their government for facility upgrades. There has been no indication that any such funding would be made available in Tasmania;

- Increasing complexity of software programs and platforms – and subsequent increases in cost
 - Our current shelter management program is now more than 20 years old and no longer fit for purpose. The replacement program called AnimalOs is based on the market leader Salesforce will be rolled out in the new year.

It will have far greater scope than Sheltermate and allow a range of plug-ins for other programs. This of course comes at a cost – with a per user charge of \$2,160 pa (\$180/month) needing to be included in forward costings. Provision has been made in developing these options for 6 users, but we will need to determine how many departmental users need to access the program in order to ensure those costs are covered in any new funding envelope.

- The national call centre is nearing capacity and will require significant investment to be brought up to best practice standards. The RSPCA members using the call centre are exploring a range of options including upgraded technology based on bots and AI to improve service delivery and improve cost efficiency. There was a significant increase in cost of this service in FY24. At this stage, pending outcomes of these investigations, no further cost increase has been factored in for FY25.

Alternate funding models

We have developed several funding options that offer varying levels of service provision. The key changes between each option are the levels of staffing, and resultant on-costs. These are shown in summary in the table below, with explanations following. More detailed financial information is included in Appendix B.

	Option 1 FY25	Option 2 FY25	Option 3 FY25	Option 4 FY25
Income				
Court/fines income	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 20,000
NRE Service Agreement	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,250,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,700,000
Other Grant Income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sundry Income	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000
Total Income	\$ 1,027,000	\$ 1,277,000	\$ 1,530,000	\$ 1,732,000
Expenses				
Animal Care Costs	\$ 165,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 180,000
People Costs	\$ 763,035	\$ 969,658	\$ 1,102,923	\$ 1,205,154
Professional Fees	\$ 15,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Subscriptions	\$ 55,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 65,000
Call Centre Service Fee	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000
Motor Vehicle Expenses	\$ 94,600	\$ 123,200	\$ 156,000	\$ 195,000
Operational Expenses	\$ 49,120	\$ 45,890	\$ 64,150	\$ 77,750
Corporate Cost Recovery	\$ 106,358	\$ 128,137	\$ 145,890	\$ 178,290
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 1,293,113	\$ 1,551,885	\$ 1,768,963	\$ 1,966,194
Net	-\$ 266,113	-\$ 274,885	-\$ 238,963	-\$ 234,194

Figure 13: Summary of alternate funding option costs

Option 1

This option assumes an increase in government funding to \$1,000,000, with a deficit of \$266,113 funded from core RSPCA resources.

It is essentially the status quo, with the addition of a fulltime Inspectorate Manager, ideally an authorised officer based in Launceston.

The cost of this appointment could be mitigated by the secondment of a police officer at Senior Sargent rank. This would provide leadership to the team as it goes through a period of rebuilding. It would also enable fast-track recruitment and training of new team members, and the development and implementation of improved response and operational protocols.

There is provision for three inspectors in both the north and south regions, allowing for them to go two-up where necessary.

This also allows for coverage for leave and other circumstances without impacting significantly on capacity. There is only one inspector in the west, but additional cover in the other regions will allow for some flexibility for inspectors to work across regions.

Option 1	
Position	FTE
Inspectorate Manager	1.0
Senior Inspector (North)	1.0
Senior Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (West)	1.0
Prosecutor	0.6

Figure 14: Staffing cohort Option 1

Option 2

This option assumes an increase in government funding to \$1,250,000, with a deficit of \$274,885 funded from core RSPCA resources.

An additional inspector has also been added to cover the western region. This means there will be three authorised officers in the north and south and two in the west. This will take some pressure off other inspectors, while still providing some flexible cover for leave and other circumstances

It also includes the appointment of a racing industry liaison officer. The government has advised there will be a role for the RSPCA following the anticipated adoption of the Racing Regulation Integrity Bill but has yet to provide insight into what this might look like. We have made it clear to the government that we will not be in a position to undertake activities in the racing industry without increased funding. We have included this position as a basic placeholder pending further negotiations.

Ensuring the safety of a larger team will require a dedicated resource to monitor staff safety and co-ordinate Inspectorate logistics. Provision has been made for the appointment of an officer to undertake these duties.

Increasing staff numbers mean increasing oncosts. This is most obvious in the budget allocation for motor vehicles.

Option 2	
Position	FTE
Inspectorate Manager	1.0
Senior Inspector (North)	1.0
Senior Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (West)	1.0
Inspector (West)	1.0
Racing industry liaison	1.0
Safety and Logistics	1.0
Prosecutor	0.6

Figure 15: Staffing cohort Option 2

Option 3

This option assumes an increase in government funding to \$1,500,000, with a deficit of \$238,963 funded from core RSPCA resources.

This model includes the appointment of part-time Community Liaison Officers in each region.

Many of the cases our inspectors see reflect a lack of understanding and capability to care for animals rather than malicious cruelty. These cases often require intensive repeat visits to provide information and education, which reduces the inspectorate's ability to investigate cruelty reports. Appointment of Community Liaison Officers who can undertake these less challenging tasks will free up inspectors to focus on enforcement and compliance activities which will deliver better animal welfare outcomes.

These team members will provide a range of support services for the inspectors as well as undertaking tasks which do not require an authorised officer. They will be able to partner with inspectors in some situations where two-up attendance is advisable; and also free additional time for inspectors to work together two-up.

With increasing resourcing in the field, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in enforcement activities. Provision has been made for a minor increase in the prosecutor's time to work with inspectors to ensure appropriate assessment of cases and successful outcomes where prosecutions are commenced.

Once again, increases in staff numbers will result in increases in on-costs, especially motor vehicle costs.

Option 3	
Position	FTE
Inspectorate Manager	1.0
Senior Inspector (North)	1.0
Senior Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (West)	1.0
Inspector (West)	1.0
Racing industry liaison	1.0
Safety and Logistics	1.0
Community Liaison (North)	0.5
Community Liaison (South)	0.5
Community Liaison (West)	0.5
Prosecutor	0.75

Figure 16: Staffing cohort Option 3

Option 4

This option assumes an increase in government funding to \$1,700,000, with a deficit of \$234,194 funded from core RSPCA resources.

In this option, the three Community Liaison Officers have been increased from 0.5 fte to 1 fte, and for the prosecutor to be lifted from 0.75 fte to 1 fte.

This is the ideal option in terms of facilitating two-up operations. It also delivers sufficient capacity to ensure adequate coverage of all areas of the state.

With a full-time appointment, Community Liaison Officers will be able to undertake more proactive preventative and education tasks. In the long run, this should eventually reduce pressures in locational hot spots.

It will also help to address difficult and entrenched issues such as puppy farming, online pet sales, disreputable breeders, and some aspects of cat management regulations (eg hoarding, lack of multiple cat permits etc).

Option 4	
Position	FTE
Inspectorate Manager	1.0
Senior Inspector (North)	1.0
Senior Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (South)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (North)	1.0
Inspector (West)	1.0
Inspector (West)	1.0
Racing industry liaison	1.0
Safety and Logistics	1.0
Community Liaison (North)	1.0
Community Liaison (South)	1.0
Community Liaison (West)	1.0
Prosecutor	1.0

Figure 17: Staffing cohort Option 4

6. CONSIDERING THE CONSEQUENCES

Why now?

A tipping point is rapidly approaching whereby inaction will lead to an avalanche effect of mounting costs, cut services, and both human and animal suffering. There is a narrow window of opportunity to forestall any damage to the public good and to capitalize upon the opportunities available.

It can be confidently forecast that the economic and service level trends that RSPCA has witnessed over the last 5 years will continue for many years to come. The global economic context remains volatile, and there is no real expectation of an abrupt cessation of the growing pressures on living standards, especially considering existential threats such as climate change. As socio-economic status correlates to incidences of animal cruelty, continued economic insecurity will drive escalating demands on our inspectorate, whilst diminishing our fundraising income.

What will happen if funding is not increased?

Without increased government funding, and in the current economic climate, the services provided under the SLA (and more generally) will need to be reduced.

Immediate impacts would be the downsizing of operations, therefore reducing the number of animals the organisation can care for (resulting in higher costs to government as it will need to care for these animals); a reduction in the number of cruelty reports the inspectorate could investigate; and a reduction in animal cruelty prosecutions. We will be unable to undertake random inspections, including breeders, kennels etc. We will be unable to undertake large-scale welfare activities eg current prosecutions of large-scale puppy farms, and also to assist in actions such as rehoming greyhounds from de-registered trainers. We will be unable to support extended activities into the racing industry or the livestock processing industry.

Our capacity to deliver other services will be limited, including

- information and education activities
- Safe Beds and emergency boarding programs;
- other emergency relief efforts (flood, fire); and
- other government programs, including cat management.

These changes will further damage Tasmania's reputation as lagging behind expectations with respect to our duty of care to animals, as animal welfare laws go un-enforced and the public loses confidence in the government's ability to hold perpetrators to account.

Risk to Inspectorate services

Should additional ongoing funding not be secured for the RSPCA inspectorate, current and future services, capability, and growth will be increasingly subject to the financial generosity of supporters and the availability of organisational cash reserves.

This means that inspectorate services – which are vital for Tasmania – are currently competing for funding alongside other activities that are key to delivering RSPCA Tasmania's vision of ending cruelty to all animals.

The present lack of certainty around adequate and ongoing funding for the inspectorate makes it difficult to plan ahead, to respond adequately to increasing reports and concerns around animal cruelty, and to work in a proactive rather than reactive manner. This in turn confers a significant risk to the Tasmanian government by threatening its ability to adequately meet its animal welfare accountabilities on behalf of the community.

Without increased ongoing funding being secured for the RSPCA inspectorate, the Tasmanian government's capacity to deliver its animal welfare accountabilities and combat animal cruelty will be compromised.

This risk may arise from operational impacts to RSPCA Tasmania including:

- reluctance to undertake large and/or complex prosecutions, for fear of the financial implications of costs being awarded if cases are unsuccessful in court;

- reluctance or inability to seize or take surrender of large numbers of animals, due to limited shelter capacity and the ongoing costs of housing, care and feeding;
- failure to expand the inspectorate to meet the demands of future increases in both the numbers and complexity of cruelty reports, as well as increasing animal numbers and population growth;
- inability to develop a more proactive approach to prevention, instead relying on reactive responses to public reporting of animal cruelty; and
- reluctance or inability to authorise costly veterinary treatment and surgeries along with emergency care, resulting in increasing animal euthanasia rates.

What does this mean for our inspectors?

Ensuring the health and safety of our inspectors is our highest priority.

The inspector role requires a specific skillset and has proven difficult to fill at times, especially in regional locations. Securing adequate funding to attract, recruit, train, remunerate, and develop inspectors is integral to retaining talent.

Significant changes have been made since 2018 in workplace health and safety standards and we need to be able to secure and improve the health and safety of our inspectors when performing their work.

Without adequate funding, we will be unable to meet basic employment responsibilities, including:

- providing additional team resources to back up inspectors attending difficult and risky situations;
- maintaining a modern, safe fleet of vehicles;
- increasing equipment capability in line with work requirements;
- making better use of surveillance assets to support investigations and to reduce on-site risk;
- providing opportunities for inspectorate team members to develop capacity and capability, meaning the team will be unable to evolve and develop in line with emerging needs;
- providing adequate remuneration and conditions to retain experienced inspectors;
- providing adequate remuneration and conditions to attract and recruit quality new talent;
- investing adequately in inspector training; and
- ensuring that manageable workloads and work/life balance are maintained.

A fully funded Inspectorate would secure our ability to:

- Recruit and retain a skilled team of inspectors and support staff;
- Invest in Community Liaison Officers, who will enhance the efficiency of the Inspectorate by undertaking support tasks that do not require an authorised officer. They will also be able to proactively provide education and support when responding to cases where the owner lacks either an understanding or the capability to care for animals.

This will reduce the mental and physical burden on inspectors who are already stretched with capacity issues and allow them to focus on priority cases of malicious animal cruelty;

- Deliver an enhanced capacity to focus on prevention activities and resources to reliably rehabilitate and rehome incoming Inspectorate animals;
- Expand our scope of activities to implement preventative programs in areas currently outside our capacity; and
- Enhance our capacity to support the government and government agencies in developing and implementing improved standards of animal welfare.

What outcomes will be achieved with increased funding?

The increase in funding will provide significant benefits for the Tasmanian government and the community more broadly by providing better support for animal welfare and more appropriate resourcing to address the problem of animal cruelty in this state.

The government has statutory responsibilities around animal welfare along with increasing community expectations to meet. Appropriately resourcing the RSPCA inspectorate to deliver vital community services on behalf of the government will help ensure these responsibilities and expectations are met and reduce the risk to government of failure to keep up with not only community expectations, but also the legislative situation in other state jurisdictions – leaving us trailing behind.

Supporting this request will send a clear message from the government to the community demonstrating its intention to properly address animal cruelty in Tasmania.

Holistic and significant benefits for the Tasmanian community will include:

- Improved animal welfare across Tasmania
- Improved effectiveness and efficiency for animal welfare enforcement throughout the state
- Greater engagement with communities in both regional and metropolitan areas around animal welfare legislation
- Support for the development of targeted education on recurring compliance issues
- Development of closer relationships between RSPCA Tasmania and animal welfare enforcement and relevant government agencies, improving collaboration and business efficiency in the animal welfare field.

An efficient, effective, and sustainable animal welfare regulator will enable:

- Secured, sustained and adequate funding enabling forward planning and a more proactive, rather than reactive, approach to addressing animal cruelty in Tasmania;
- Reduction in risk to the Tasmanian government by ensuring the enforcement capability of the Inspectorate is not adversely impacted by the variability of monetary donations funding RSPCA Tasmania each year;
- Improved knowledge and skills of authorised officers and decision-makers in the Inspectorate, including expanded access to best practice compliance, investigation and enforcement training;
- Increased business efficiency and service provision to the Tasmanian government through expanded engagement and training with emerging technologies, improving Inspectorate capabilities in surveillance, compliance and investigation;
- Reduced risk of budget-related impacts to Inspectorate services for RSPCA Tasmania. It will also enhance our capacity to deal with emerging issues and future challenges;
- Provision of sufficient resources for the Inspectorate to both respond to cruelty reports as they arise, and a capability to assist the Tasmanian government with expert advice reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of legislation and penalties for animal cruelty in Tasmania when required;
- Sufficient regional inspectorate resources to ensure RSPCA Tasmania will have the capacity to model best practice enforcement of animal welfare issues across the state with the projected expansion of the state's population;
- Access to improved computer systems and software to provide an expanded data analysis capability, with relevant information sharing and dissemination to Tasmanian government agencies;
- Expanded measures and agreements for the appropriate sharing of relevant information between animal welfare enforcement and government agencies, improving the animal welfare response for the Tasmanian community; and
- Ability for the Inspectorate to work closely with the Tasmanian government and government agencies to proactively identify and address priority animal welfare issues through expanded analytical capability and inter-agency engagement.

7. WHAT DO WE WANT?

Proposed changes

Our funding submission for FY25 is predicated on the following changes to the SLA and the Administrative Guidelines:

- a four-year revised SLA with an annual agreed work plan and funding indexation in line with annual CPI increases;
- increased core funding to mitigate workplace health and safety risks to inspectors and to enable increased service delivery;
- clarification and revision of responsibilities as outlined in the administrative guidelines, recognising resourcing constraints;
- provision of a legal cost indemnity to protect the organisation against potentially devastating unsuccessful prosecutions;
- recognition of the significant financial burden large prosecutions could impose on the organisation, and an agreement to underwrite costs above an agreed level or which extend over long periods of time;
- commitment to facilitating improved cross-agency communication and co-operation through an MOU encompassing all agencies involved in the delivery of animal welfare services; and
- specific funding for any project outside the agreed deliverables identified in the annual work plan (eg development of a publicly accessible database that includes information on all people successfully charged with animal welfare offences).

Preferred funding model

In an ideal world, our preferred funding model would obviously be Option 4.

However, we recognise that an increase in funding of that magnitude would be a big ask in one go, especially in the current economic climate.

Option 3 would be our next choice, as it effectively addresses the major issue on the table ie the need to ensure the safety and well-being of our inspectors.

Having said that, the long-term sustainability of the Inspectorate service is of paramount importance to the organisation.

We could work within any of the options outlined, assuming the constraints inherent in each option are fully understood and recognised.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the government to develop a funding model that delivers financial sustainability as well as improved animal welfare outcomes.

8. ABOUT RSPCA TASMANIA

Who we are

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

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 towards the benefit of animals.

As a not-for-profit charity, we strive to maintain an open-door policy, so no abandoned, neglected, injured or surrendered animal is turned away or forgotten. Along with cats and dogs, the RSPCA provides assistance to a wide range of other animals, including horses, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, goats, and sheep.

The RSPCA's Brand

The RSPCA is one of the most recognisable and well-loved brands in the country. It has been the number one charity on the YouGov charity index, which measures the public perception of charities and NGOs, for the past two years and in the top ten for the past decade.

Australia 2023 Charity Rankings

Based on the YouGov CharityIndex Donor Consideration score: a measure of which charities a respondent would likely donate to tomorrow

Rank	Brand name	Score
1	RSPCA	31.1
2	Cancer Council Australia	30.2
3	Guide Dogs	28.7
4	The Salvation Army	26.4
5	Beyond Blue	25.3
6	Australian Red Cross	25.3
7	Lifeline Australia	24.7
8	Ronald McDonald House Charities	24.5
9	Make-A-Wish Australia	22.5
10	National Breast Cancer Foundation	22.1

Chart shows charities with the highest average in Donor Consideration score between 1 January to 31 December 2022.

YouGov

Figure 18: National YouGov charity index ranking 2023

The RSPCA is Australia's best known and most trusted animal welfare organisation, with unprompted and prompted awareness well above other similar organisations.

RSPCA Tasmania commissions well-known independent agency Kantar to undertake quarterly brand surveys covering a range of issues.

The annual summary survey for 2022-23 showed strong unprompted brand awareness and confirms our place as the pre-eminent animal welfare organisation in the state.



RSPCA Tasmania continued to be top-of-mind for unprompted animal welfare agencies (68% first mention; 81% all mentions).

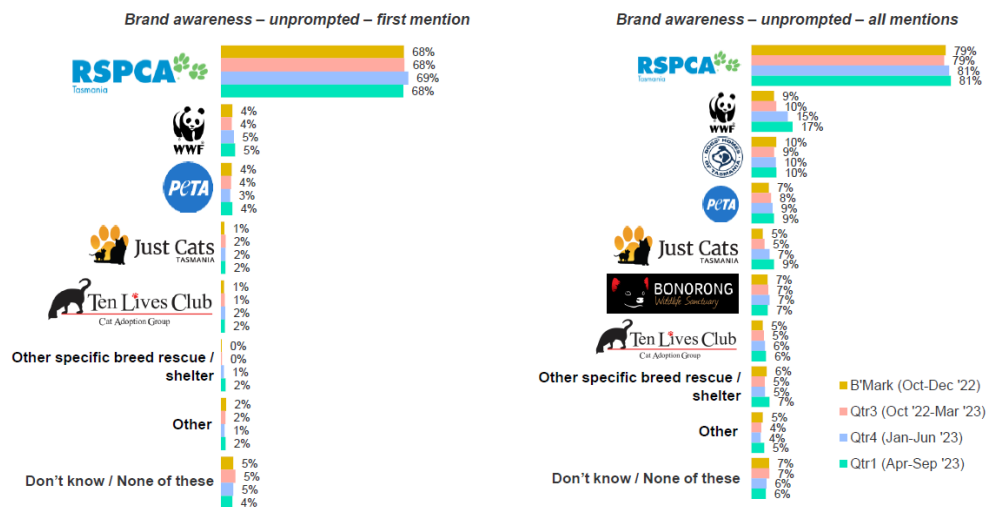


Figure 19: Unprompted brand awareness - Animal welfare organisations in Tasmania

The survey also confirms that the majority of Tasmanians expect improved animal welfare outcomes should be a high priority for the state government.



Awareness of services provided by RSPCA Tasmania remained stable in Qtr1.

- Three out of four Tasmanians who were aware of RSPCA Tasmania knew that the organisation provided the services of investigating and prosecuting animal cruelty and neglect (75%) and pet adoption (72%).
- Very few Tasmanians who were aware of RSPCA Tasmania had no prompted awareness of any service (4%).
- Those 24 years and younger (46%), were less likely to be aware of RSPCA Tasmania's advocacy on animal welfare issues compared to the total (67%).

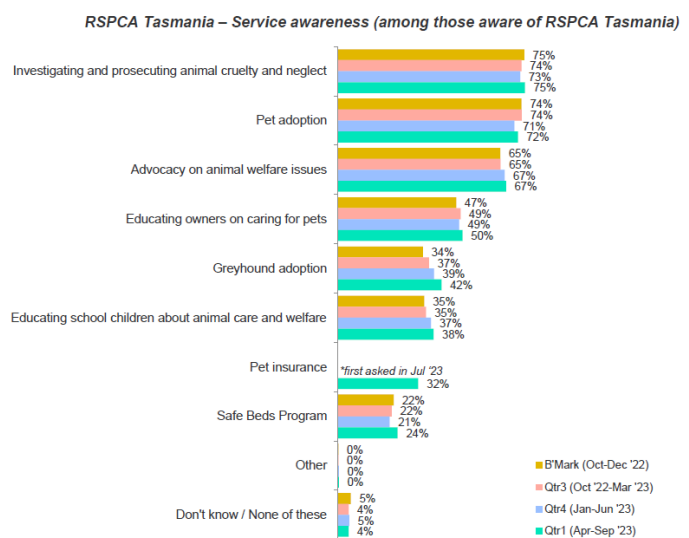


Figure 20: Awareness of services provided by the RSPCA

The survey results showed that 82% of those aware of our work report that they feel positive about us, with only 4% feeling negative. Our efforts within animal welfare advocacy have been well 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.

Only 4% of people have a negative perception of the organisation – and 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.



Perceptions of RSPCA Tasmania's efficacy regarding enforcing animal cruelty laws have remained relatively stable over time. Perceptions about caring about enforcement saw a significant increase in August 2023, following it reaching its level since tracking began in July 2023.

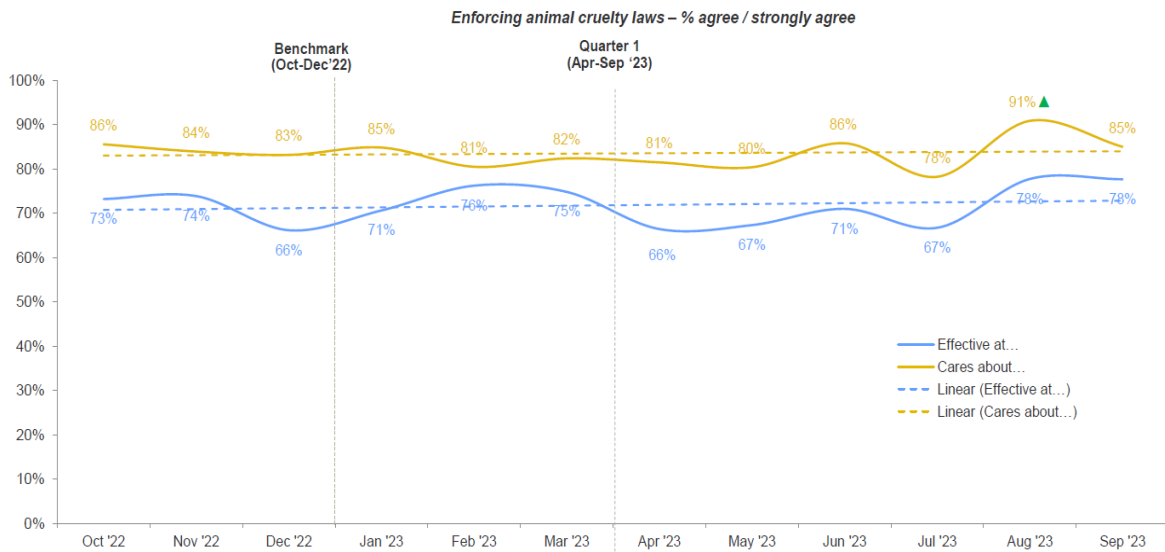


Figure 21: Perceptions of RSPCA efficacy in enforcing animal welfare laws

Community members expect the RSPCA to advocate publicly for improved animal welfare outcomes. The focus and priority varies according to several factors (eg age, sex, education, location etc) but there are consistent themes each time the survey is undertaken.

Not surprisingly, top of the list is an expectation that we will advocate for initiatives that reduce animal cruelty.



Reducing animal cruelty (73%) and the number of puppy farms (65%) were the issues that Tasmanians (who were aware of the brand) wanted the RSPCA Tasmania to advocate for. Support for sports and recreation initiatives (duck hunting, racing) were less commonly identified as priorities.

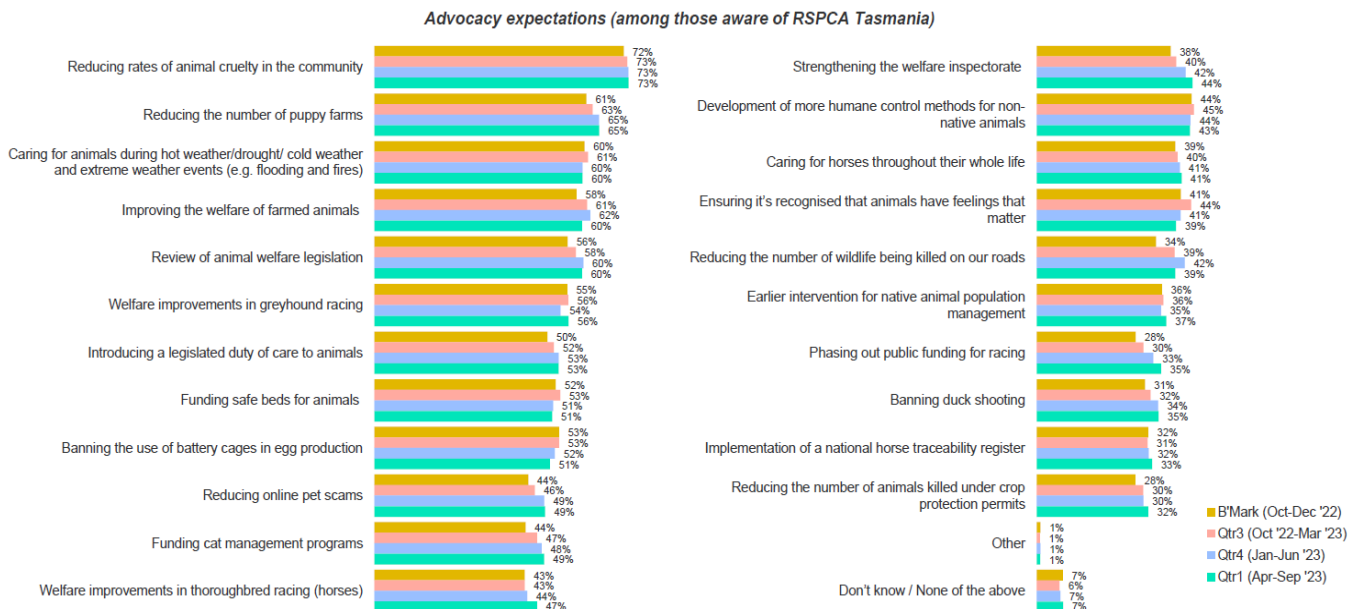


Figure 22: Community priorities for animal welfare advocacy

What we do

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.

However, we don't only serve animals in need, but also owners and carers who require guidance and support through education and assistance in relation to domestic violence, aged care, homelessness, mental health, and more.

During the past three years, RSPCA Tasmania has:

- Investigated over 7,000 reports of animal cruelty;
- Provided care for more than 6,670 animals;
- and
- Delivered information to thousands of people on animal welfare, responsible animal care and pet ownership through school, community and online education.

Our role is to act as a conduit for the community's concerns about animal welfare, to ensure those concerns are heard by our state's decision makers. So our advocacy activities are a vitally important part of our work.

Animals play a central role in the lives of many people. Most Tasmanians, whether they live in suburbia, rural properties, or in regional towns, say animal welfare is important or extremely important to them.

With an ultimate goal of improving animal welfare outcomes, we acknowledge the crucial role of humans in keeping our animals safe.

Our priorities

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 Spreyton is dedicated to caring for, rehabilitating and rehoming animals.
- Our Adoption and Retail Centres (ARCs) in Latrobe and Launceston 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 Community Outreach Centre in Hobart is the base for our activities in the south of the state and provides a central location not just for our activities, but for many animal welfare organisations to come together.
- Our Inspectorate operates under delegated powers from the state government to investigate and prosecute instances of alleged animal cruelty. Inspectors are located in Hobart, Launceston, and Devonport, and operate across the state. This team is supported by a national RSPCA call centre equipped to handle

incoming reports and also assisted with services provided by members of our community outreach team located at our sites across the state.

- Our team of dedicated volunteers assists across 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 located 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.

We have a strong track record in project management and delivery

- The RSPCA has been a registered charity for more than 150 years.
- The RSPCA provides the Tasmanian government – and the community - with an end-to-end solution in animal welfare across the state, from prevention through to compliance, animal care, adoption and rehoming.
- Our Inspectorate has been operating successfully on behalf of the Tasmanian government for many years, over which time operational costs have been significantly supplemented by funds generated from our own efforts.
- The RSPCA has a strong board of independent directors. We have robust internal management controls, and audited procedures in place to demonstrate compliance with the terms of funding deeds and grant agreements.
- The RSPCA has strong community support. Each year, around 120 volunteers provide on average 100 hours of volunteer time to support our activities. That's the equivalent of around 6.5 fte - with a basic award wage rate of \$26/hour, that's a generous donation of \$312,000!

Appendix A: Summary Financial Reports, FY20 - FY24

	Actual FY20	Actual FY21	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Budget FY24
Income					
Court/fines income	\$ 80,013	\$ 21,017	\$ 19,478	\$ 32,994	\$ 15,000
NRE Service Agreement	\$ 550,000	\$ 550,000	\$ 550,000	\$ 550,000	\$ 700,000
Other Grant Income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 100,000	\$ -
Sundry Income	\$ 2,727	\$ 12,259	-\$ 10,901	\$ 909	\$ 1,200
Total Income	\$ 632,740	\$ 583,276	\$ 558,577	\$ 683,903	\$ 716,200
Expenses					
Animal Care Costs	\$ 136,563	\$ 150,144	\$ 142,604	\$ 150,726	\$ 160,376
People Costs	\$ 490,021	\$ 448,878	\$ 481,064	\$ 490,021	\$ 719,707
Professional Fees	\$ 12,014	\$ 29	\$ 11,042	\$ 11,866	\$ 22,929
Subscriptions	\$ 570	\$ 474	\$ 752	\$ 8,913	\$ 45,000
Call Centre Service Fee	\$ 29,568	\$ 27,126	\$ 28,418	\$ 30,414	\$ 40,500
Motor Vehicle Expenses	\$ 20,192	\$ 35,942	\$ 47,647	\$ 69,468	\$ 111,000
Operational Expenses	\$ 46,182	\$ 23,298	\$ 28,306	\$ 68,915	\$ 59,507
Corporate Cost Recovery	\$ 89,907	\$ 82,659	\$ 82,500	\$ 88,500	\$ 116,302
Total Expenses	\$ 825,017	\$ 768,550	\$ 822,333	\$ 918,823	\$ 1,275,322
Deficit	-\$ 192,277	-\$ 185,274	-\$ 263,756	-\$ 234,920	-\$ 559,122

Appendix B: Detailed Financial Forecasts for Options 1-4 FY25

	Option 1 FY25	Option 2 FY25	Option 3 FY25	Option 4 FY25
Income				
Court/fines income	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 20,000
NRE Service Agreement	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,250,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,700,000
Other grant income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sundry Income	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000
Total Income	\$ 1,027,000	\$ 1,277,000	\$ 1,530,000	\$ 1,732,000
Expenses				
Animal Care Costs	\$ 130,000	\$ 130,000	\$ 135,000	\$ 140,000
Inspectorate Animal Expenses	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Veterinary Costs	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000
Wages & Salaries	\$ 675,081	\$ 857,595	\$ 975,177	\$ 1,064,712
Superannuation	\$ 77,634	\$ 98,623	\$ 112,145	\$ 122,442
Staff Training/HR/Uniforms/Other	\$ 10,320	\$ 13,440	\$ 15,600	\$ 18,000
Legal Fees	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Professional fees	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Subscriptions	\$ 55,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 65,000
Call Centre Service Fee	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000
Meeting Expenses	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
Printing, Stationery & Postage	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
Minor Equipment	\$ 8,600	\$ 11,200	\$ 13,000	\$ 15,000
Travel & Accommodation	\$ 4,300	\$ 5,600	\$ 6,500	\$ 7,500
Motor Vehicle Expenses	\$ 64,500	\$ 78,400	\$ 97,500	\$ 120,000
Fuel	\$ 30,100	\$ 44,800	\$ 58,500	\$ 75,000
Registration & Licenses	\$ 2,150	\$ 2,150	\$ 2,800	\$ 3,750
Operating Expenses	\$ 19,350	\$ 21,500	\$ 35,750	\$ 45,000
Repairs and Maintenance	\$ 1,720	\$ 2,240	\$ 2,600	\$ 3,000
Corporate Cost Recovery	\$ 106,358	\$ 128,137	\$ 145,890	\$ 178,290
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 1,293,113	\$ 1,551,885	\$ 1,768,963	\$ 1,966,194
Net	-\$ 266,113	-\$ 274,885	-\$ 238,963	-\$ 234,194

Appendix C: What the inspectors tell us

The RSPCA recognises the causes of the current unsustainable rises in our cost of living are complex and partially due to forces outside the control of state governments. Many of these same forces are behind the increasing numbers of Tasmanians struggling to afford the basics – including care for their often much-loved companion animals.

But this does not give governments an excuse not to act. All levels of government have levers at their disposal to make a difference. There never seems to be a shortage of money for pet projects or loud voices.

If they choose to, the state government could intervene to address some of the very real issues that are resulting in often horrendous animal welfare outcomes and the subsequent detrimental mental and physical health impacts on the people involved in these situations.

Our team members and our inspectors in particular face dangerous and emotionally draining and often dangerous situations every day. They have a wealth of experience and they are able to identify solutions to many of the problems they see in the field.

Here are just a few case studies outlining some of these issues.

Case Study: Inspector safety

An RSPCA inspector attended a complaint in a rural property in North East Tasmania. The property was secluded and not visible from the road. The complaint had been of cattle in poor condition.

As the inspector arrived at the scene, the person of interest appeared with a deceased cow on the front forks of a tractor. He was immediately defensive and became increasingly aggressive. The inspector decided that they were in danger and entered their vehicle and began to reverse down the drive.

The person of interest re-entered their tractor, offloaded the carcass, and then proceeded to chase down the inspector's vehicle. The tractor came up level with the front of the reversing car and held the forks above the bonnet pointing at the windscreen. The inspector finally reached the end of the property and escaped unscathed. They later returned to the property with other enforcement agencies.

The person of interest had a history of PTSD, physical and emotional health issues, alcohol abuse and a family breakdown.

The inspector was asked about the need for funding to allow Inspectors to work in pairs. In response, they stated that they experience daily moments of feeling 'unsafe' on the job. They emphasised that the job was isolating and required constant alertness as to one's surroundings. The inspector stated that they still remember that day vividly and the feelings of fear and adrenaline from the experience are never far from the surface.

Case Study: Cost of living pressures

In response to the impact of the cost of living crisis upon animal welfare, one inspector highlighted the increasing situation of inspectors being called into situations at veterinary clinics where an owner simply cannot afford to pay their bill and the vet (or the client) has called the RSPCA.

These are highly emotional situations where people can react in unexpected ways. This is especially the case where there is an expectation that the RSPCA will fund all costs for any animal needing veterinary care. When the inspector (or other RSPCA team member) advises this is not the case, there are often unpleasant (and even violent) scenes.

Every day, we see evidence that animals are suffering due to the rising cost of living, either through directly rising veterinary expenses, inability to access veterinary services in a timely manner, or through having reduced capacity to afford treatment.

In these situations, inspectors will work with the client to attempt to find a way to handle the bill rather than being forced to take the animal into care.

The shortage of vets is not unique to Tasmania, but its effects are exacerbated by the limited number of clinics outside metropolitan centres. This leaves people in rural and remote areas with little or no access to veterinary services and limits their ability to manage pain and suffering – even if cost is not a constraint.

The state government could help by funding programs to attract more vets to the state, or by providing subsidies for upskilling and accreditation, or by establishing a funded desexing program that would enable owners to address some issues before they become problematic.

Case Study: Animal welfare concerns not prioritised

The RSPCA received a complaint on 2/8/23 from a neighbour about two dogs and a rabbit that appeared to be abandoned. There was an eviction notice at the property that had been posted nine days earlier. The animals had been left on the property but there had been no communication from the Bailiffs or Department of Justice to the RSPCA about the abandoned animals.

The dogs had disappeared, and the rabbit was deceased.

The death of this rabbit and the disappearance of these dogs are the product of a lack of prioritisation of animal welfare concerns and ineffective communication between enforcement bodies.

Case Study: Lack of interagency communication

The RSPCA received a complaint about some chickens that had reportedly been abandoned. On attending the property, our Inspector found the chickens in the rear of the property. Attached to the property was an eviction notice serviced by bailiffs three months earlier. In the meantime, a neighbour of the person of interest had been entering the property and feeding the chickens. This was not organised, and it was only by chance that the neighbour noticed and was willing to feed the animals unprompted. This is another example of animals potentially suffering due to a lack of effective communication between enforcement agencies.

In relation to this issue, one of our Senior Inspectors noted that cases like these are unfortunately an all too common occurrence. Further, they stated that there needs to be reform in first-responder incident protocols to include establishing if any animals are present at the scene of an incident and communicating this information to the RSPCA.

Appendix D: Comparison of Funding for Other First-Responder Services

Almost two-thirds of Australian households have a pet today, and 90% of us have had a pet at some time. This includes an estimated 5.1 million dogs, 3.8 million cats, 11.3 million fish, 5.6 million birds, 614,000 small mammals, 364,000 reptiles and 1.8 million 'other' pets. If this data were extrapolated across all Australian households, it would mean there are more pets than people in Australia.

Tasmania is the state with the highest incidence of pet ownership, with 69% of households having at least one companion animal. According to ABS data, the total number of families in Tasmania is 150,573. Recent figures show that 44% of Tasmanians live with at least one dog, 34% live with at least one cat, and 16% live with at least one of each.

There is no doubt that there is significant public interest in the welfare of companion animals, as evidenced by the thousands of people who sign petitions, follow animal-oriented social media pages, and the numbers of animal-centred news items in Tasmanian media publications. Most Tasmanians, whether they live in suburbia, rural properties, or in regional towns, say animal welfare is important or extremely important to them, and most Tasmanians expect improved animal welfare outcomes should be a high priority for the state government.

Animal welfare enforcement resources are drastically underrepresented in the Tasmanian community.

Assuming there are at least 150,000 companion animals across the state, the annual funding tranche of \$550,000 allocated to the RSPCA represents around \$3.50 per animal.

In FY23, the RSPCA dealt with 2,128 complaints, which equates to a mere \$258.46 of public funding per animal cruelty report – including those cases prosecuted, but not including multiple visits to finalise any complaint. It is not hard to appreciate that this is simply not enough funding to deliver animal welfare outcomes that meet contemporary community expectations.

According to a survey conducted this year, 48% of Australians considered their companion animals as equally importance as their children. According to Treasury figures, Tasmania Police is funded at around \$540 per capita. Whilst there is no direct comparison between the welfare needs of people and animals, this funding extraordinary discrepancy certainly does not pass the pub test.

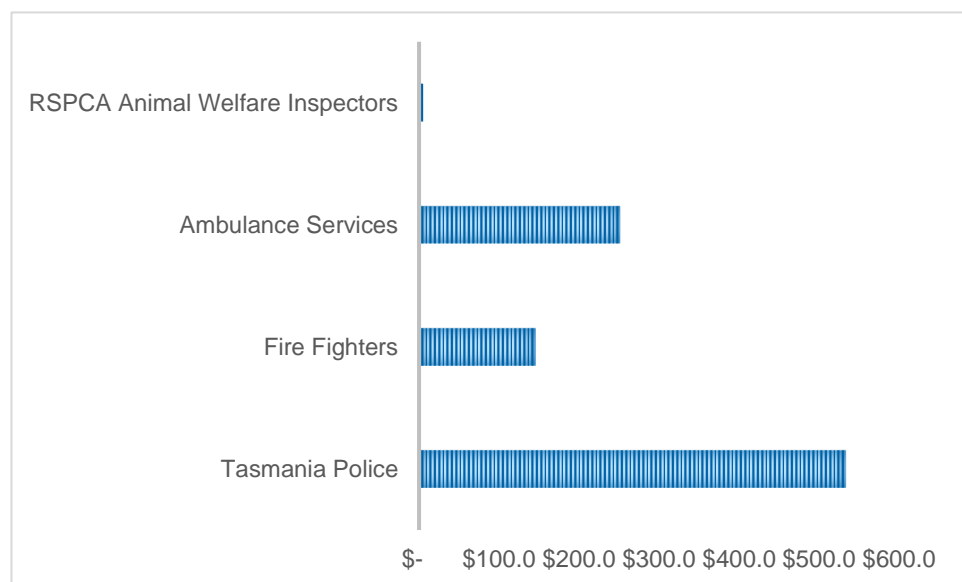


Figure: Funding per capita (animal/human) for first responder services in Tasmania

The level of funding for first-responder services is obviously reflected in the number of personnel on the ground.

Once again, animal welfare resourcing is well short of any meaningful capacity.

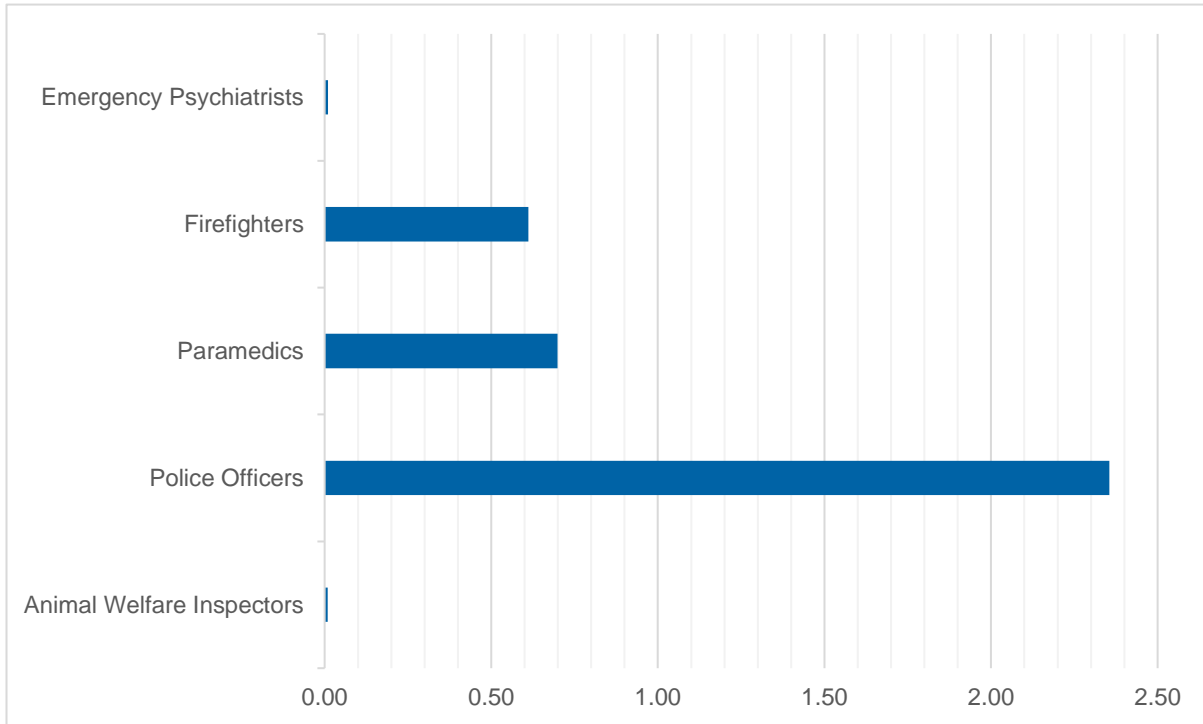


Figure: Number of first responder personnel per 1000 people in Tasmania

If the Tasmanian government intends to reflect the expectations of the community, then it must recognise that animal welfare is a non-negotiable for Tasmanians. It is not enough to advocate for animal welfare on paper without corresponding funding just as it would be insufficient to advocate for community safety and provide nominal funding to the Tasmanian Police.



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