

# Improving Animal Welfare Outcomes in Tasmania

**Submission for 2024/2025 State Budget**

December 2023



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# 1. Overview

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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, the RSPCA has supported the Tasmanian government to enforce them.

Community trust and respect for our work, along with sound scientific evidence, is the foundation on which the RSPCA is built.

The community respects our knowledge of animal welfare, which is grounded in science and based on experience. In the 146 years since the RSPCA was established in the state, we have helped thousands of animals in need in all kinds of situations: in homes, backyards, on farms, in the wild and at sporting arenas.

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.

During the past three years, RSPCA 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.

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 experiencing the impact of these changing circumstances in our work caring for vulnerable animals.

We're seeing increasing demand from the community for assistance in caring for companion animals in situations of domestic violence, homelessness, and physical and mental health crises. In many instances, cost of living pressures are forcing families to make hard decisions about their ability to continue to care for family pets.

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.

We have listened to the issues our stakeholders have told us need to be addressed in order to improve welfare outcomes for Tasmanian animals. This document reflects these messages, and sets out our priority expectations for funding in the 2024/2025 state budget.

Community demands for better animal welfare are in line with independent survey results show most Australians believe animal welfare is important to them.

We know we speak for most Tasmanians when we say animal welfare should be a high priority for the state government.

Preparation of the state budget each year provides the government with the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to community priorities.

This document sets out a number of initiatives the RSPCA believes are essential to ensure improved animal welfare outcomes in Tasmania.

These are a blend of recommended actions that will improve the lives of many animals and their human companions, foster innovation, and support regional communities.

All have real, measurable benefits to the community, and can assist in economic recovery and resilience as we manoeuvre the difficult economic conditions facing most Tasmanians.

These initiatives will enable us to continue to meet the increasing demands of the Tasmanian community for better animal welfare, and also improve awareness of the importance of human/animal relationships in improving mental health and community health outcomes.

On that basis, the RSPCA is calling on the state government to show the people of Tasmania that they care for and support the welfare of all animals in our community.

We urge our elected representatives to recognise these projects in developing a forward plan for improving animal welfare outcomes across Tasmania.

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Investment 2024/2025</b>	<b>Total \$ (over 3 years)</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Keeping families together: Safe Beds	\$70,000	\$210,000	Communities NRE
Implementing the state cat management strategy: RSPCA's role as a cat management facility	\$220,000	\$220,000	NRE
Improving community awareness of animal welfare amongst young people: AWARE Program	\$50,000	\$150,000	Education NRE
Working together: establishing a central animal welfare compliance database	\$80,000	\$80,000	NRE Justice Racing Local Government
Ensuring ongoing relationships between the elderly and pets: Animals in aged care facilities	\$100,000	\$200,000	Communities Health
Informing public policy: Delivering an Animal Welfare Symposium	\$100,000	\$100,000	DPAC
Strengthening human/animal bonds: Improving RSPCA skills to deal with people in need:	\$0	\$0	Communities Health

*(Note: all costs are exclusive of GST)*

## 2. Background

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Tasmanians have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world and pets are integral members of many of our families.

And we know that most people care for their pets as they care for other members of their family: they look after their health and hygiene, exercise and entertainment; they clean up after them; and generally care well for them.

For many of us, having a pet keeps us sane in stressful times. Our experience during the pandemic reinforced the fact that our companion animals are an integral part of family life, and they provide comfort and company when we need it most.

In communities where many people are increasingly isolated, pets are their significant other. This means their pet is their only comfort and, in many cases, their only link to the outside world.

However, more and more people are becoming concerned about the impact of the rising cost of living on their ability to care for their pets, with the biggest source of worry being able to afford vet care.

We know that pets are one of the best types of therapy for someone going through a hard time, so to separate someone from their pet where they're going through a hard time or trauma it actually makes it worse. However, as the cost of living crisis forces people to make impossible sacrifices, many will have no choice but to give up the very thing that keeps them going. Kids have to come before pets, and other vulnerable people such as the elderly and sick will suffer the most during these difficult economic times.

Whilst this is increasingly an issue across Australia, the issue is of specific relevance to the Tasmanians for several reasons including:

- Our high incidence of pet ownership;
- Our demographics, with high levels people in low socio-economic groups and low levels of education and literacy;
- The lack of public focus and funding animal welfare; and
- The fact that our legislative and regulatory environments lag so far behind other jurisdictions.

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 stopgap 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. Our only reliable government funding is an annual service level agreement for our inspectorate. The quantum of funding for this was not increased – or even indexed – from 2018 until last financial year (FY23).

We have made a separate submission for increased funding for our inspectorate. This can be accessed here: <https://www.rspcatas.org.au/event/securing-the-rspcas-front-line-animal-welfare-service-capability/>

Over the past two years, we have received grant funding for our Safe Beds program and some other one-off community activities.

Whilst this is most welcome, the amounts provided go nowhere near enabling us to meet rapidly growing demand for our programs and services. Furthermore, the grants have been either one-off or on an annual basis, which means we can't plan ahead with any certainty.

This has meant that, in order to meet government and community expectations, the RSPCA has been required to increasingly subsidise the inspectorate and other services from other fundraising and philanthropic donations. In an environment where all charitable fundraising is declining, this is unsustainable.

This submission to the 2024-25 budget process has been split into two parts with this section discussing general organisational issues and the other submission handling the inspectorate service.

This separation has been decided in order to emphasise the vital importance of ensuring the inspectorate is recognised as the legislated enforcement mechanism for animal welfare legislation in Tasmania. Whilst other aspects of our activities may fall beyond the scope of what constitutes work on behalf of the government, the inspectorate should be seen as akin to other enforcement agencies such as Tasmania Police and Biosecurity Tasmania etc and funded accordingly.

In this submission, we have identified the key issues that impact on animal welfare in Tasmania, and propose strategies to improve outcomes in the future. These proposals do not address the legislative and regulatory framework within which animal welfare is dealt with, but rather focus on immediate and pressing situations for which increased funding is urgently needed.

We believe that the state government must commit to further investment to meet both its own responsibilities and growing community expectations around animal welfare and that these proposals will demonstrate acceptance of the need to do better.

## 3. Supporting improved animal welfare outcomes

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### 3.1 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); cat management; 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.

### 3.2 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.

There is increasing demand for support services for people facing challenging circumstances that disrupt their ability to care for their companion animals. These include family and domestic violence situations, emergency physical and mental health issues, homelessness, natural disasters, and the pressures of increasing cost of living expenses.

Over the past two years, we have received some grant funding for some programs including Safe Beds (family and domestic violence), Ready Pet Go (emergency preparedness), and an education program to promote awareness of the *Dog Regulations 2013*. Whilst this is most welcome, the amount provided goes nowhere near enabling us to meet rapidly growing demand for these programs. Furthermore, it is on an annual basis which means we can't plan ahead with any certainty.

However, we also provide many services to the community 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.

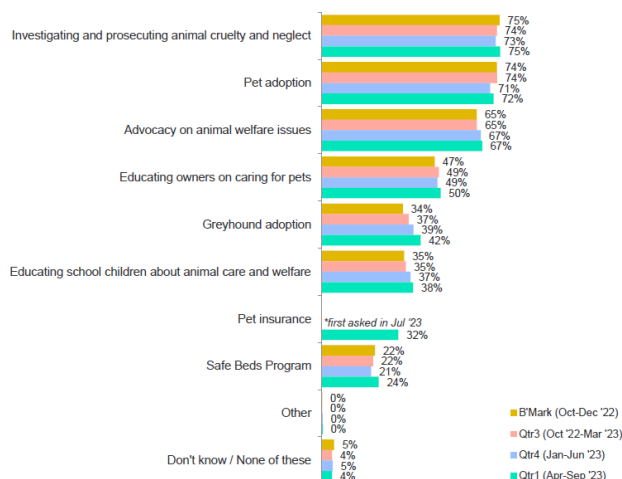
- **Advocacy:** Supporting government policy development and issues management activity through participation in the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC), and taskforces to address issues such as proposed changes to the Animal Welfare (Dog) Regulations 2016, animal welfare in abattoirs etc.
- **Education:** 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 all projects to ensure the central corporate services are able to sustainably support governance functions and operational requirements.

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



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

RSPCA Tasmania – Service awareness (among those aware of RSPCA Tasmania)



- 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 1: Awareness of services provided by the RSPCA (Kantar November 2023)

These results show that the community is engaged with the variety of services offered by RSPCA Tasmania. However, the standouts include the 21% that intend to use Safe Beds and the 21% that intend to use AWARE. Both of these programs are new to our organisation and the above statistics demonstrate their success. We are seeking ongoing funding for these programs in this submission – see sections 4.1 and 4.3 below



### 3.3 Funding constraints limit our ability to deliver services

The RSPCA is a not-for-profit organisation, dependent on generous philanthropic donors for most of our funding.

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 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.

RSPCA Tasmania faces an even more difficult situation. Our community is experiencing unprecedented cost of living challenges and this impacts on donor and philanthropic capacity. Opportunities for corporate fundraising are also limited, as there are few corporate headquarters or major companies based in the state.

A further and major consideration is the low level of funding support and lack of certainty provided by state government fund. RSPCA Tasmania is grateful for the funding support we receive from the Tasmanian government to deliver animal welfare investigation and compliance activities. Occasional grants for one-off projects also enable us to deliver limited additional services. However, these projects are all funded on an annual basis, which does not allow for forward planning or continuity in service delivery. Furthermore, compared to other states, government funding provides only a small proportion of our income. In FY 2023, this contribution amounted to less than 30% of income; whereas in other states it can exceed 50%. Most other RSPCAs receive capital funding and other programs have 3-5 year agreements.

Overall, we have seen a static performance in our general fundraising program, with only 3% year-on-year growth for FY23, with similar levels of giving forecast for this year.

However, funding is not the only issue that poses challenges. Costs have been rising rapidly across the board for all businesses, including the RSPCA.

- Costs of caring for and rehabilitating animals have increased significantly 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.

The need for upgrading and expanding infrastructure is pressing, but we do not have the reserves to enable commitment to anything other than routine repairs and maintenance programs.

- Funding under the service level agreement with the state government for delivery of animal cruelty services remained unchanged for the period FY 2018 – FY 2023. A small increase was provided in the current financial year, but this did not even bring the funding level back to that in 2108 in real terms. This has resulted in the organisation subsidising the cost of the inspectorate by more than 30%.
- Along with most other NGOs, 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 funding towards maintaining the same quality and reach of services.

- Increased employment costs are another factor. With more than 50% of our total expenses being people-related; increases in wages and superannuation costs have impacted significantly. Our workers compensation premium also increased by more than 30% in the last financial year.
- Increasing expectations from government (and the community) to deliver unfunded services have also reduced our reserves. Activities under the Cat Management Act 2009 cost more than \$100,000 last financial year. Expectations for increased involvement in the racing industry also placed significant stress on the organisation, in both financial and human resource terms.
- 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.

Reputational risks too 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.

As a result of these pressures, the RSPCA recorded an audited 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.

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

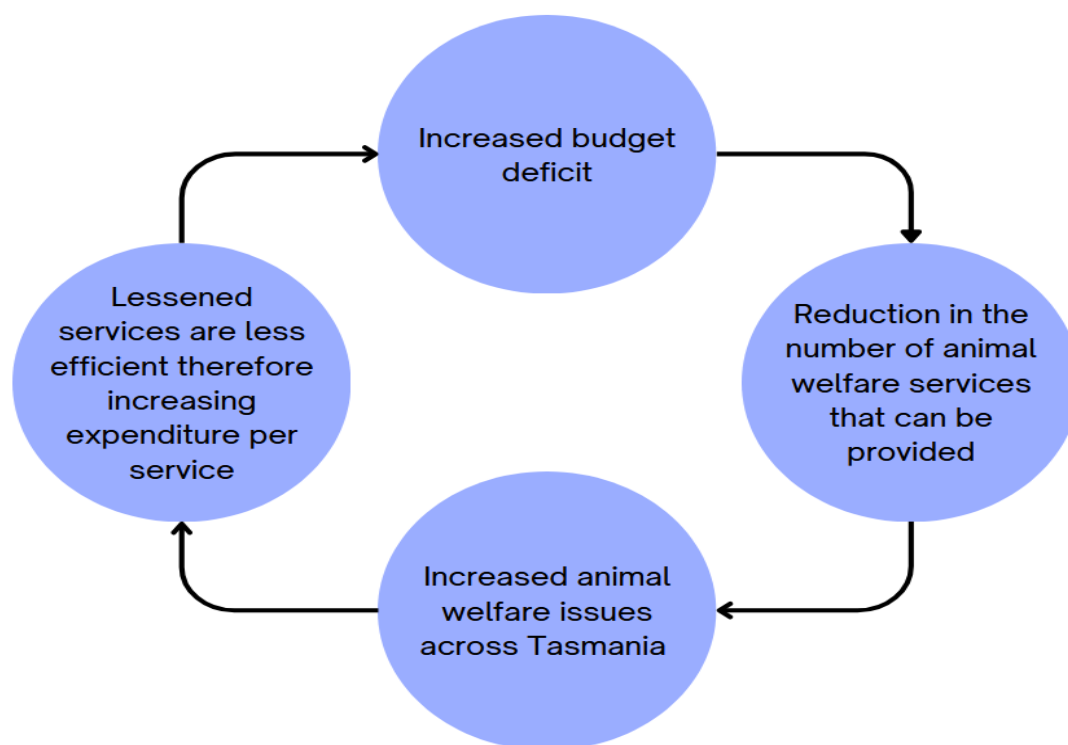


Figure 2: Impact of reduced funding on service delivery capacity

Without a substantial increase in funding, we will need to carefully consider our capacity to continue to provide services in the current form, let alone expand service delivery to meet increasingly urgent community needs.

## 4. Improving animal welfare outcomes

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### 4.1 Keeping families together: Safe Beds Program

#### ***Why is this a priority?***

A woman's decision to leave a violent and abusive relationship is a complex process. She first needs to consider the risks to her and her children. Paradoxically, taking that step towards safety is also the time of greatest danger of homicide, sexual assault, and increased violence.

Pets and service animals are also a part of the lives of many families. This means they are an important part of the decision-making process when women consider leaving a violent situation.

Seventy per cent of women fleeing domestic violence also report pet abuse, and it's another reason many victims delay leaving. They fear the animal who has provided love and support when they need it most will be neglected, or they won't be fed or cared for. Worse, they are worried their animals will be killed. And these fears are real.

Violence towards pets is a really strong indicator that people will also be violent towards the humans in their life. Animal abuse often is linked to the severity of domestic violence, and individuals who commit pet abuse are more likely to inflict physical and mental violence on other family members.

Many jurisdictions are recognising these facts and changing legislation to include animals in family violence laws. More than two-thirds of US states have already enacted legislation that includes provisions for pets in domestic violence protection orders.

NSW laws have been amended to include harm, or threats of harm, to an animal in the definition of intimidation. This means perpetrators can also be charged with domestic violence offences when animals are used to coerce the victim. The changes mean that protection of animals will also be made standard in domestic violence orders. The Victorian Parliament has recently implemented similar provisions to those in NSW.

Sadly, despite all this evidence, Tasmania is falling behind. It is time for our government to follow step and adopt changes in legislation that recognise animal abuse as a form of family violence.

As well as these basic amendments, changes will also need to be made in other areas.

Pets need to be recognised as family members in the eyes of the law, because at the moment they are only considered as property. Often, women feel like they have to stay in violent relationships because their pet is registered to the male in the family. In these circumstances, ownership of the pet should automatically move to the person trying to flee that situation.

Abusers often use pets to manipulate and control their victims, but very few women's refuges allow animals. Changes will be needed to short stay and emergency accommodation regulations to allow people to escape fraught situations with their pets. This is a particular issue in rural communities where it is difficult for victims of domestic violence to move away from an abusive situation, and to become 'invisible' to their abuser. There also needs to be more support for safe haven refuges for women, their children, and their pets.

The approach to this issue to date in Tasmania has been very ad-hoc, with a very few programs largely funded and managed by charitable organisations and no co-ordination. There are several small programs available for people with dogs, but nothing publicly noted for cats or other companion animals.

The RSPCA Tasmania Safe Beds Program (Safe Beds) is designed to provide temporary housing for pets of people who are seeking refuge from domestic violence and to address the link between animal and human abuse and child protection.

It is common practice for the perpetrator of domestic violence to lure family members back home by threatening to harm the pet. With the Safe Beds for Pets Program, families can now leave domestic violence situations and not fear for the safety of their pets. The program gives domestic violence victims peace of mind and allows them to secure their own safety and make arrangements for the future.

The program was established in 2021 with support from A Paw Up and later funding from the Petbarn Foundation. In its first year, 2021-22, Safe Beds housed 73 animals with the duration of these stays varying from 7 days to 90 days. In June 2022, Safe Beds was provided funding from the State Government via the National Partnership on Family/Domestic Violence Response. In 2022-23, the number of animals cared for Safe Beds increased by 104% to 149 animal stays. The duration of these stays varied from 2 through to 321 days.

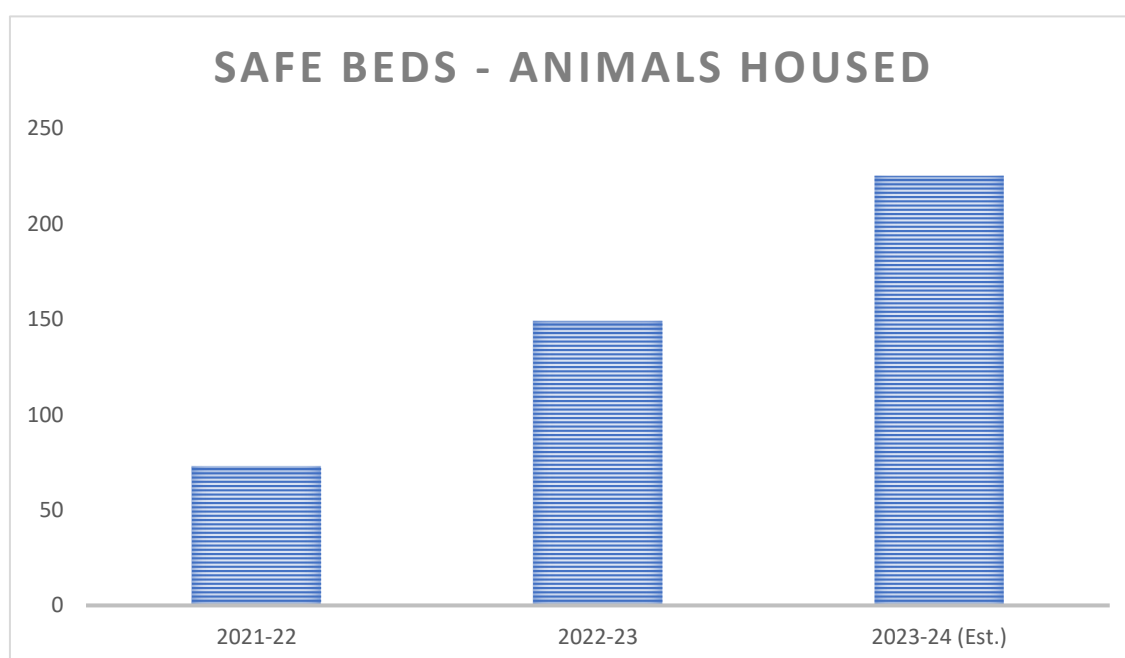


Figure 3: Animals accommodated in RSPCA Safe Beds Program

The Safe Beds program has met a need that was otherwise lacking in the support provided to the Tasmanian community. However, key issues include:

- Most funding stems from charitable fundraising and issues are often raised about the inappropriateness of potentially having these services indirectly funded by victims or the families of victims.
- Animals involved in domestic violence situations tend to require veterinary care and these expenses represent a substantial upfront and ongoing cost for the RSPCA Tasmania.
- The growing demand for services in these difficult economic times, when companion animals are integral support measures for people facing personal trauma.

Ideally, the best solution to this growing demand would be a funding arrangement that provides a given amount per night that an animal is within the program. This will ensure that cases of genuine need are not rejected as funding is depleted, and that the expenses of this vital service do not threaten the ability of our organisation to act across the variety of areas we operate within the community.

These measures would be an important step towards improving support and so the safety of victim-survivors when animals are also caught up in family violence. When women know their pets will be safe, it allows them to take care of themselves and their children. And the safety of vulnerable Tasmanians should be of paramount importance to all of us.

#### **What investment is needed?**

*The RSPCA is seeking funding of \$210,000 (\$70,000 pa over 3 years) to support the establishment and management of a Safe Beds Program.*

*The funding will be used to assist the RSPCA to:*

- *develop and establish a co-ordinated network of safe bed providers;*
- *fund safe bed places for the pets of Tasmanians in at-risk situations of family violence; and*
- *promote awareness of the Safe Beds program amongst the public and agency support services.*

## **4.2 Implementing the state's cat management strategy: RSPCA's role as a cat management facility**

### **Why is this a priority?**

Cats are present throughout Tasmania as domestic pets, free-living unowned strays, and as feral animals.

As pets, cats are wonderful companion animals and have a range of health benefits for their owners. However, cats are also a nuisance in our community and have serious impacts on human health, as well as agriculture and wildlife.

As a result, in consultation with key stakeholder groups, the Tasmanian government developed the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan 2017-2022. Whilst this Plan includes laudable objectives, no funding has been allocated by government to implement identified strategies on the ground.

Three not-for-profit organisations have been nominated as cat management facilities in this Plan, including the RSPCA. These organisations have obligations under the Act which result in significant expectations from both the government and the wider community.

As it presently stands, cats may be trapped and taken to a cat management facility. Cat management facilities may also receive surrendered cats from owners who can no longer care for their cat. This has been a very positive step for the management of the issue of stray and feral cats in Tasmania. However, organisations nominated as cat management facilities have obligations under the Act which result in significant expectations from both the government and the wider community.

As yet, there has been no funding available to assist in delivery of the program or in meeting these obligations. This is placing a significant burden on nominated cat management facilities, but especially on the RSPCA. As the only state-wide organisation involved in the on-ground delivery of the cat management program, the RSPCA faces significant public expectations with respect to coordinating the collection, receipt, and transport of surrendered and trapped cats.

Over the past eighteen months, we have commissioned regular independent quarterly surveys of community attitudes to a number of issues, including cats.

It is clear from this research that attitudes to the issue of free-roaming cats have changed significantly over recent years. This means our approach to managing the problem in the community must also change.

The legislative and regulatory framework within which cat numbers and impacts are managed must be updated to reflect community attitudes. This will also require an ongoing funding commitment from the government to address key issues and barriers to change.

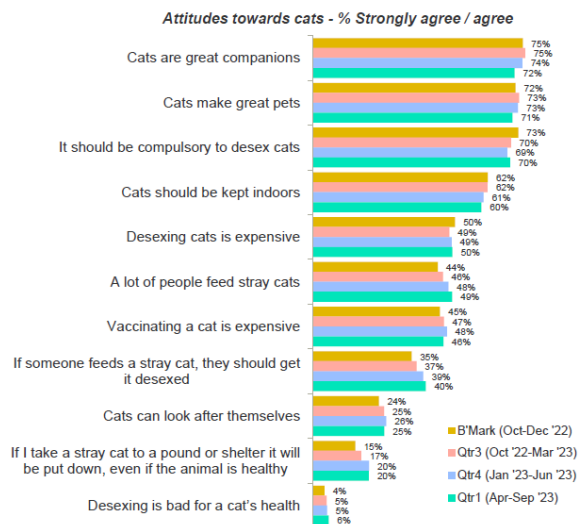
The figures below provide detailed information as to what the public is telling us about managing cats.

The majority of people now agree that cats should be contained to their owners' properties. More than half those surveyed did not agree there were any reasons why cats should not be contained to their owners' properties.



### Seven in ten Tasmanians agreed that cats make great companions (72%) and great pets (71%).

- Although there was agreement it should be compulsory to desex cats (70%) and very low agreement desexing a cat is bad for their health (6%), half agreed that desexing cats is expensive (50%).
- Cat attitudes have remained consistent over the past three quarters in Tasmania.
- Women had more favorable attitudes towards cats than men. Women were significantly more likely to agree cats make great companions (76%), and make great pets (75%) compared to men (67% and 66% respectively). However, they were also significantly more likely to agree desexing cats is expensive (55% compared to 44% for men).
- Tasmanians living in Hobart were also more likely to have positive attitudes towards cats. They were significantly more likely to agree cats make great companions (76%), and make great pets (76%) compared to regional Tasmanians (68% and 67% respectively).
- Those aged 24 years old and younger were less likely than their older counterparts to agree it should be compulsory to desex cats (45%).



**KANTAR PUBLIC**

CA1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?  
 Base: All respondents - B'Mark (n=315), Qtr3 (n=618), Qtr4 (n=618), Qtr1 (n=647)  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significantly higher or lower result to previous quarter.

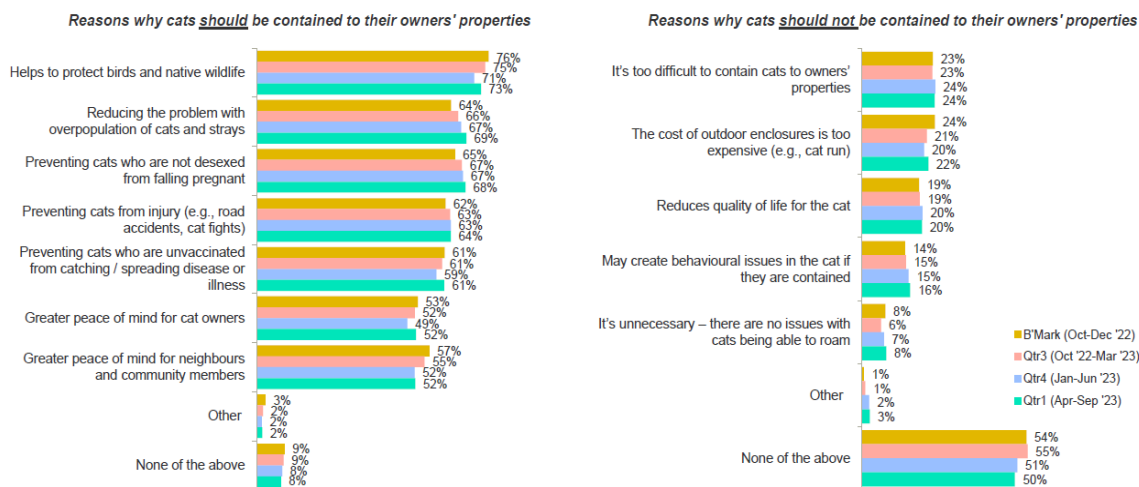
Figure 4: Tasmanians love their cats

Even if there might be some issues with containment, two thirds of Tasmanians agreed that there should be a mandated requirement for cats to be kept at home.



### One in two Tasmanians did not agree with any reasons why cats should not be contained to their owner's property (50%).

- However, Tasmanians could see the benefits to containing cats to their owner's property. Seven in ten agreed it would help protect birds and native wildlife (73%) and reduce issues of overpopulation (69%) and preventing desexed cats falling pregnant (68%).



**KANTAR PUBLIC**

CA9. Are you aware of any benefits to mandating the containment of cats to their owners' properties?  
 CA10. Are there any reasons why you think cats should not be contained to their owners' properties?  
 Base: All respondents - B'Mark (n=315), Qtr3 (n=618), Qtr4 (n=618), Qtr1 (n=647)

Figure 5: Tasmanians see no reason why cat's shouldn't be kept at home



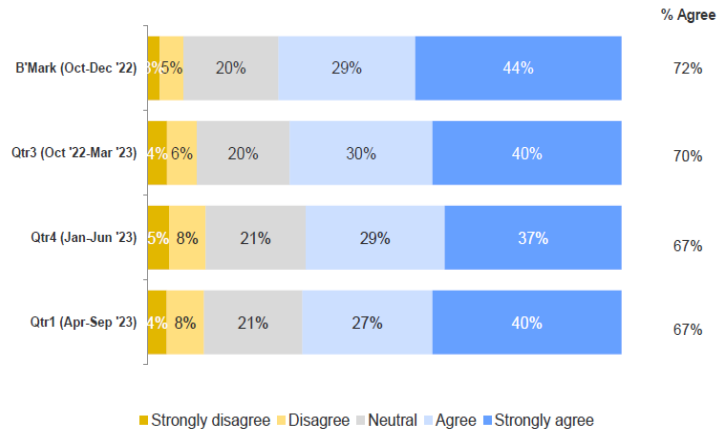
Feeding unowned cats contributes to ongoing issues in managing the establishment and impact of cat colonies. The cost of desexing these cats is a significant barrier to minimising cat reproduction rates.



Two in three Tasmanians agree with introducing a mandate for cats to be contained to their owner's property (67%).

- Agreement with the mandate has remained consistent from Qtr1.
- Tasmanians 24 years old and younger were significantly more likely to disagree with the introduction of a mandate to keep cats contained on their owners property (21%), compared to 25-44 year olds (14%), 45-64 year olds (10%), and those 65 years or older (7%).

Agreement with introduction of mandate that cats are contained to their owners' properties



KANTAR PUBLIC

CA8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a mandate that cats are contained to their owners' properties?  
Base: All respondents - B'Mark (n=315), Qtr3 (n=618), Qtr4 (n=618), Qtr1 (n=647)

Figure 6: Tasmanians believe cats should legally be required to be kept at home

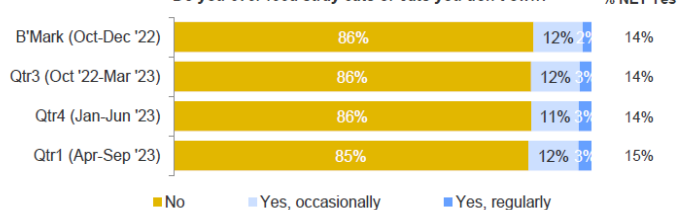
The cost of desexing is seen as a major barrier to population control. Most other states have subsidised desexing programs to assist in managing populations of both owned and unowned cats.



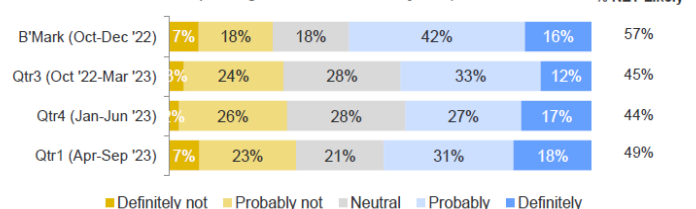
Few Tasmanians feed stray cats (15%) though half would consider taking a stray to the vet for de-sexing (49%).

- The number of Tasmanians who report feeding stray cats they don't own has remained stable over the past three quarters.
- Of those who have fed stray cats, half would at least probably consider taking the stray to the vet to make sure it had been desexed (49%).
- Tasmanian women were significantly more likely to report occasionally feeding a stray cat (14%) compared to men (9%).

Do you ever feed stray cats or cats you don't own? % NET Yes



Consider taking stray cat to the vet to make sure it has been desexed (Among those who feed stray cats) % NET Likely



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CA2. Do you ever feed stray cats, or cats that you don't own?  
Base: All respondents - B'Mark (n=315), Qtr3 (n=618), Qtr4 (n=618), Qtr1 (n=647)  
CA3. Would you ever consider taking that stray cat to the vet to make sure it has been desexed?  
Base: Those who feed stray cats/cats they don't own - B'Mark (n=44), Qtr3 (n=90), Qtr4 (n=90), Qtr1 (n=98)  
▲ ▼ indicates significantly higher or lower result to previous quarter.

Figure 7: People who feed stray cats would have them desexed if the cost was subsidised

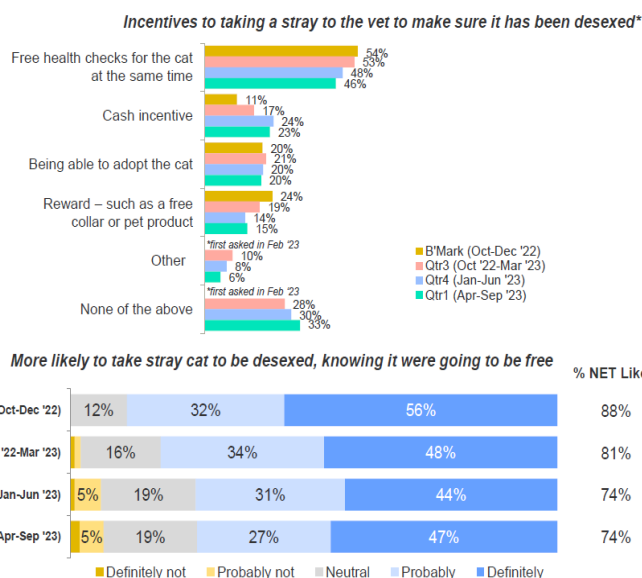


Subsidising veterinary costs would encourage many more people to ensure unowned cats in their neighbourhoods are desexed.



Three in four Tasmanians who feed stray cats would be more likely to take the cat into the vet if they knew it was going to be free (74%).

- Further, half who feed stray cats would definitely take the cat to be desexed if they knew it was going to be free (47%).
- Women and those who have a pet were more likely to consider taking a stray to the vet for all of these incentives, expect for the cash incentive, compared to men and those who do not currently own a pet.
- Tasmanians over 65 years old were significantly less likely to find the incentives appealing compared to those 64 years old and younger, with 52% saying none of the above would encourage them.
- Likelihood to take stray cats to the vet to make sure they had been desexed for those who feed stray has remained consistent in Qtr1.



KANTAR PUBLIC

CA4. Is there anything that would encourage you to consider taking a stray cat to the vet to make sure it has been desexed?  
 Base: All respondents - B'Mark (n=315), Qtr3 (n=618), Qtr4 (n=618), Qtr1 (n=647)  
 CA5. Would you be more likely to take that cat to the vet to make sure it has been desexed, if you knew that it was going to be free?  
 Base: Those who feed stray cats/cats they don't own - B'Mark (n=44), Qtr3 (n=90), Qtr4 (n=90), Qtr1 (n=98)  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significantly higher or lower result to previous quarter.

Figure 8: Subsidising veterinary costs would decrease populations of stray cats

As the only state-wide organisation involved in the on-ground delivery of the cat management program, the RSPCA is ideally placed to coordinate the collection, receipt, and transport of surrendered and trapped cats to a cat management facility. However, our limited financial resources constrain our ability to address these challenges.

We have consistently requested funding for our role in implementing cat management regulations. In the last financial year (2022/2023), we invested more than \$100,000 in cat management activities. One case alone resulted in costs of more than \$30,000. These activities were funded by scarce donor funds.

The current situation is sustainable. Without appropriate resourcing, the RSPCA will be unable to continue to provide services to deliver on the government’s commitments with respect to managing stray and feral cats.

The government must invest in the establishment of appropriately funded and managed cat management strategies as opposed to the ad hoc system which relies on charities to fund cat management activities.

Given the public’s willingness to take cats to be desexed absent an upfront cost, the implementation of an effective desexing scheme should form part of this program.

**The RSPCA is seeking funding of \$300,000 (\$100,000 annually over 3 years) to support its role in the implementation of the Cat Management Act.**

The funding will be used to assist the RSPCA to:

- set up and maintain a system for the co-ordination of the management of trapped and surrendered cats across the state, including transport logistics;
- develop a state-wide incentive scheme for desexing cats;

- *investigate the development of a centralised state-wide Cat Management Facility which will provide improved infrastructure to house and manage cats brought and surrendered to the RSPCA under the Act; and*
- *undertake surveys and other research to guide a public awareness campaign aimed at improving understanding of the Cat Management Act and the role of Cat Management Facilities.*

### 4.3 Improving community awareness of animal welfare: AWARE program

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Over the past decade, there have been significant advancements in our scientific understanding of the welfare of animals, and community expectations about the treatment of animals has evolved accordingly. Recent polling by Roy Morgan Research (Attitudes to Animal Welfare, March 2022) found that:

- 98% of Australians consider animal welfare to be important
- 94% support laws that ensure animals are provided with a good quality of life
- 97% support laws that ensure animals are protected from cruel treatment
- 80% support the government doing more to protect animal welfare

Tasmania has a high rate of companion animals, with 66% of Tasmanians living with cats, dogs, and other animals. RSPCA Tasmania receives thousands of calls through the Animal Cruelty Hotline and through our state contact centre each year. Our ambition is to reduce those calls and the poor treatment of animals that underpin them by making the community aware of their responsibilities as owners of companion animals.

Education is the key to lasting change. The RSPCA AWARE program (Animal Wellbeing: Awareness, Responsibility and Education) aims to help young people develop responsible and caring behaviour towards animals, preventing cruelty and neglect in the long term.

The AWARE Program provides resources for educators, students, and parents. These resources help young people develop knowledge, skills, and understandings around improving the welfare of all animals, be they companions, farmed, or wild animals.

In the last financial year, we committed funds to delivery of this program on a 0.5 fte basis. This enable us to deliver 98 presentations to classes in Tasmanian schools. We held mascot naming and drawing competitions to get younger students engaged and presented to students from kindergarten to college level.

In the program delivery, we share a presentation of the broad range of work that the RSPCA conducts and the elements of the law that we are responsible for enforcing but our main goal here is to get students and teachers signed up to our AWARE web portal. [AWARE Program ★ RSPCA Tasmania - Prevent Animal Cruelty | Educate & Advocate](#) In the past year, 80 students and teachers have signed up to utilise the resource which integrates with the Australian curriculum and teaches students compassion for animals whilst also supporting their core education needs.

To that end, we have also brought in other team members who have the aptitude for presenting and included our current crop of experienced volunteers in training sessions, always ensuring that our limited resources stretch as far as possible. Improving animal welfare is fundamental to every person at the RSPCA so it follows that we adopt a whole-of-organisation approach to education. However, without additional funding, we are at the limit of what we can achieve

Ongoing funding is needed to ensure that the program:

- is economically sustainable;
- has a long-term impact on the welfare of animals in Tasmania;
- has broad reach from cities into regional and remote parts of the state; and

- contains fresh resources promoting animal welfare to every child and educator in Tasmania.

**What investment is needed?**

**The RSPCA is seeking funding of \$150,000 (\$50,000 annually over 3 years) to support delivery of the RSPCA AWARE Program.**

*The funding will be used to assist the RSPCA to deliver:*

- *enough trained volunteers to ensure sustainable delivery of the program;*
- *a reduction in animal welfare legislative offences in target postcodes due to a deeper understanding of animal welfare;*
- *broader community awareness of the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act and the Five Freedoms;*
- *greater awareness in the community about how to report animal cruelty by establishing trust in students to be able to discuss reporting with parents and care givers; and*
- *build on the natural empathy in children to become adults who care appropriately for animals.*

#### **4.4 Working together: Establishing a central animal welfare compliance database**

**Why is this a priority?**

A number of agencies and organisations have direct responsibilities for animal welfare under Tasmanian legislation and regulations. As well as the RSPCA, these include Biosecurity Tasmania, Tasmania Police, the Office of Racing Integrity, and local government. Other agencies also have related but indirect responsibilities, including in cases of animals in care of people with mental health issues or where community service orders are issued by courts.

Information exchange about animal welfare investigations and emerging issues is therefore a valuable tool in ensuring a more seamless and whole-of-government approach to managing animal welfare outcomes across the state.

For example:

- issues arising from actions by one agency are not notified to other agencies eg where ORI or police have jurisdiction to prosecute an animal welfare offence but choose not to, the fact that there is no advice shared about this often means that opportunities for the RSPCA (or other agencies) to follow up are lost;
- convictions against offenders prosecuted by the RSPCA are not included on criminal history reports and prohibition orders;
- individual agencies may not be aware of information held by other agencies and, where relevant information is held it is not in user-friendly formats or readily accessible to facilitate use by authorised officers; and
- opportunities for increased efficiencies through information sharing and resource alignment are not identified.

There is a recognition that this inability to exchange information results in a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, hinders investigations, compromises the safety of all personnel involved, and also puts at risk welfare outcomes for animals.

One significant example is the issue of dog registration. All dogs over the age of 6 months in Tasmanian must be registered under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.

However, under the requirements of the *Dog Control Act 2000*, applications for dog registration and kennel licences must be made to the general manager of the relevant council.

This means that the data for dog registration is fragmented across the 29 municipalities in Tasmania and stored in many different formats. This raises difficulties in law enforcement by making it virtually impossible for authorised officers to find and then access relevant data related to an animal and owner.

The above example represents a small part of the data that is often material in an animal welfare investigation; and it illustrates the need for a central register on which all relevant data for all Tasmanian animals is stored with access provided to the relevant enforcement bodies.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment has funded the RSPCA to develop a model memorandum of understanding between relevant agencies that will deliver a contemporary and more effective system for co-operative activities and information sharing.

This report has identified the need for greater cooperation between enforcement agencies.

One aspect of this is to develop a central database in which all relevant data for animal welfare enforcement is recorded. This would include data such as:

- Information as to possible enforcement actions
- Details of completed investigations and sanctions imposed;
- High risk properties and persons; and
- More effective management of issues related to animal welfare eg online scams and puppy farms.

Oversight of the database in both development and implementation stages would be overseen by an advisory group comprising representatives from all relevant agencies, including:

- RSPCA Tasmania
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment
- Department of Local Government (and possibly also LGAT)
- ORI (or replacement entity)
- Tasmania Police

The RSPCA will maintain the database after it has been set up.

The database will allow for greater transparency and communication between all relevant enforcement agencies. It will allow for more consistent enforcement of legislation and regulation across the State.

And, importantly, it would serve as a fundamental next step for improving animal welfare legislation enforcement in Tasmania.

### ***What investment is needed?***

***The RSPCA is seeking funding of \$80,000 in 2024/2025 for the implementation of a state wide central database for animal welfare related information.***

*The funding will be used to assist the RSPCA to:*

- *Develop and implement the database;*
- *Work co-operatively with other Tasmanian agencies to more effectively and efficiently utilise resources dedicated to animal welfare;*
- *Identify and prioritise opportunities for pro-active collaboration across agencies working in the animal welfare space;*
- *Provide government with accessible and timely information as to issues emerging in the animal welfare landscape which can then inform policy responses; and*
- *work co-operatively with other Tasmanian agencies to prevent puppy farming operations online pet sale scams.*

## 4.5 Ensuring ongoing relationships between the elderly and pets: Animals in aged care facilities

### **Why is this a priority?**

The pandemic demonstrated how vital companion animals can be for the physical and mental health of their humans. The [health benefits](#) associated with elderly people looking after companion animals include reducing stress, reduced blood pressure, increased social interaction with their community and keeping the brain active through learning.

Recognising this, various organisations around Australia have begun to develop programs that bring companion animals to aged care communities to spend time with senior citizens.

RSPCA NSW has developed an [Aged Care Program](#) that intends to keep companion animals together with their owners. The variety of services offered in this program include:

- temporary foster accommodation and/or emergency pet boarding if the owner requires medical treatment, respite or other assistance
- assistance with veterinary treatment
- home visits to assist the elderly with basic pet care
- assistance with pet grooming
- assistance with transport to and from the local veterinarian

A coordinator in one centre with a similar program stated:

“It provides a welcome distraction for residents who may be in chronic pain, provides mental stimulation, helps with reminiscence – [especially] for people living with dementia, and can help increase social interaction” ([Source](#)).

### **What investment is needed?**

***The RSPCA is seeking funding of \$150,000 (\$100,000 in year 1, and \$50,000 in years 2 and 3) for the development and delivery of a program to support animal programs in aged care facilities.***

*The funding will be used to assist the RSPCA to:*

- *Develop and deliver the program;*
- *Bring companion animals into aged care facilities*
- *Ensure a safe and educational environment for all participants*
- *Educate and provide materials to facilities, participants, and other stakeholders.*

## 4.6 Informing public policy making: Delivering an animal welfare symposium

### **Why is this a priority?**

Changing public attitudes to animal welfare need to be matched with contemporary legislative and regulatory frameworks. Sadly, Tasmania continues to lag far behind other jurisdictions in updating relevant legislative and regulatory tools.

The RSPCA is considering organising a multi-organisation Animal Welfare Symposium focussed on improving the stewardship of animals in Tasmania. The symposium would be run in 2025 as a hybrid event with both in-person and online delegate options.

It would galvanise and bring together stakeholders from a wide range of organisations with varying expertise to share their experiences and knowledge, and to learn from each other.

The symposium will showcase thought-provoking leaders from various traditional and non-traditional fields that relate to animal welfare. It will canvass a broad suite of contemporary animal welfare considerations, with presentations by international, Australian, and local speakers.

The outcomes of the symposium will inform the development of evidence-based discussion papers that can inform consensus policy making that will drive change in legislative and regulatory frameworks. This will not only set the standards for the next decade, but also position Tasmania as a thought leader in animal welfare policy.

The key objectives of the symposium would include:

- Raising awareness of the ethical, economic, and social importance of animal welfare;
- Highlighting strategies employed by industry and governments to improve the welfare of animals and their owners;
- Facilitating discussion between organisations about issues best dealt with by a multi-agency approach e.g., animal hoarding; and
- Developing broad-based policy approaches to animal welfare issues to inform government decision-making.
- This will be a significant community-building event for anyone who works with, cares for, or advocates for animals and their human companions.
- The RSPCA will be seeking partnership funding from other organisations to deliver this symposium

#### ***What investment is needed?***

***The RSPCA is seeking funding of \$100,000 for the organisation and delivery of an Animal Welfare Symposium in 2025.***

*The funding will be used to assist the RSPCA to:*

- *Organise and deliver an Animal Welfare Symposium in 2025;*
- *Prepare and publish the proceedings of the symposium; and*
- *Develop position papers on animal welfare policy issues for consideration by government based on the outcomes of the symposium.*

#### **4.7 Strengthening human/animal bonds: Improving RSPCA skills to deal with people in need**

Mahatma Gandhi understood the importance of the human/animal bond. In his autobiography, he said, “[M]an’s supremacy over the lower animals meant not that the former should prey upon the latter, but that the higher should protect the lower, and that there should be mutual aid between the two.”

Recognising the ways that companion animals enrich human lives - and understanding the depth of the affection between many humans and animals - may be the key to not only better health, but to improving the welfare of society as a whole. The tangible benefits to the physical and mental well-being of companion animal carers have been confirmed by scientific research. Companion animals provide company, encourage exercise, and increase social interaction.

They give pleasure, teach responsibility, they love and are loved in return. Their carers are healthier and happier than non-carers. In fact, our pets are such positive influences on our lives that one study found that Australian ownership of cats and dogs saved approximately \$3.86 billion in health expenditure over one year.

There is evidence that social networks which are based on shared concern over the welfare of animals can lead to increased human-human interaction, as well as activities involving pets (eg dog-walking clubs).



Walking a dog gets people out of private spaces, which can be isolating, and into public areas where interactions with neighbours and other walkers are possible. Yet the pressures of modern day-to-day life are such that many established social networks are breaking down. This results in increased social isolation and loneliness, especially among older people and those with health or disability issues.

The RSPCA is increasingly faced with being a first responder in situations where marginalised people are reaching out for assistance and understanding through their companion animals. This can be in a range of circumstances, including:

- People made homeless with no way of caring for their pets;
- People fleeing family violence situations with their pets;
- Hoarders where pets are the most obvious sign of increasingly serious mental health issues;
- People with mental or physical health issues who need respite care for their pets whilst they undergo treatment; and
- People taken into custody with no family network to look after their pets.

The RSPCA has extensive experience in dealing with the actual animal-related issues in these situations. However, these are often symptoms, rather than causes. Adding to the complication is the fact that these cases often involve a range of agencies that are providing some form of support services to the people involved – and where we are unfamiliar with the scope, processes, and personnel. As a result, we are spending inordinate amounts of time navigating these networks – and we are simply not resourced to do this either effectively or efficiently.

This experience has made it increasingly clear that the development of strong and supportive networks that reach across agencies and include other first responder NGOs like the RSPCA will be a key factor in delivering improved community health outcomes. Establishing and strengthening links and client referral pathways across service providers will enable people to better access secondary consultation, specialist advice and emergency services when needed. As well as developing the appropriate networks and communications links, there may also be a need to establish partnerships and agreements to facilitate cross-agency and NGO coordination and resource sharing arrangements.

The situation of hoarding is just one example of the need for integrated agency responses. These situations require expertise from a range of specialist services including medical and mental health practitioners, case workers from Centrelink or the NDIS or other support agencies, the RSPCA, and potentially the police. Working together, agency and NGO teams can in some cases identify at-risk members of the community and initiate preventative interventions.

Even if the engagement comes at a later stage, a strong working relationship between first responders and other service providers can minimise harm and stress - and hopefully deliver improved longer-term outcomes for people and their companion animals.

The RSPCA is keen to facilitate this process. However, in order to do this, we need to expand our skills base. Embedding a social worker or someone from a community service agency in our organisation on secondment would enable us to better understand and scope a sustainable program model going forward.

### ***What investment is needed?***

***The RSPCA is seeking a one-year secondment of a social worker or similarly experienced person from within a community service agency environment.***

*The funding will be used to assist the RSPCA to:*

- *Provide more informed and holistic services to those who seek our support; and*
- *Assist in developing a sustainable program model to deliver these services in the future.*



## 5. About RSPCA Tasmania

### 5.1 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.

### 5.2 Our 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 6: 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).

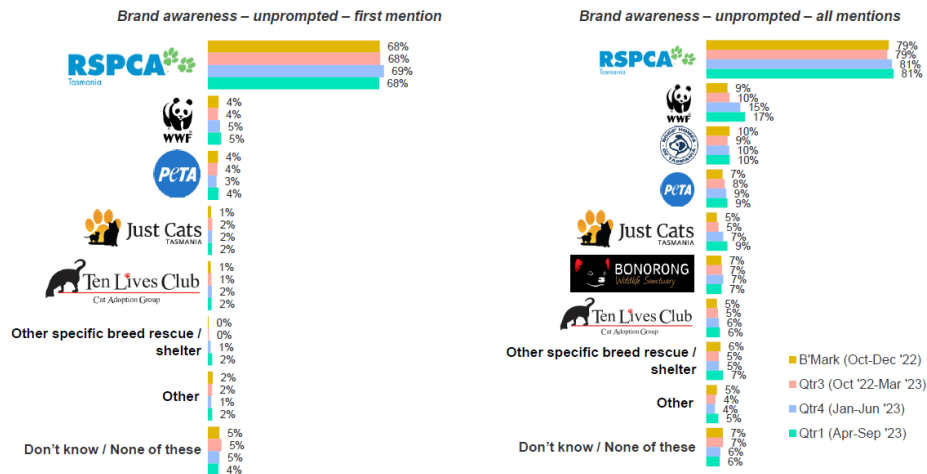


Figure 9: Unprompted brand awareness - Animal welfare organisations in Tasmania (Kantar November 2023)

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

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 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. Whilst all reports are responded to, the resource constraints that limit activity 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.

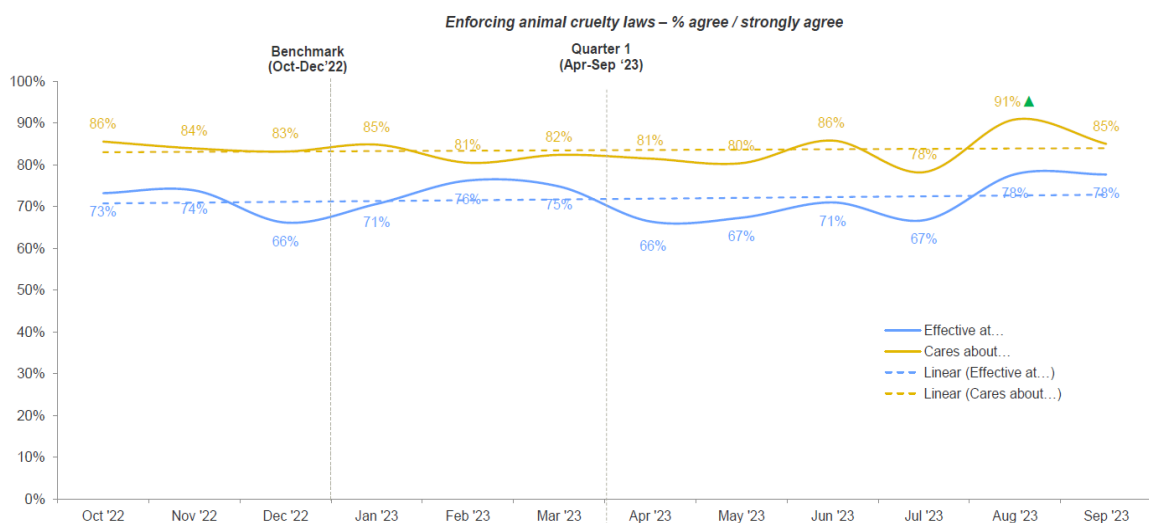


Figure 10: Perceptions of RSPCA efficacy in enforcing animal welfare laws (Kantar November 2023)

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.

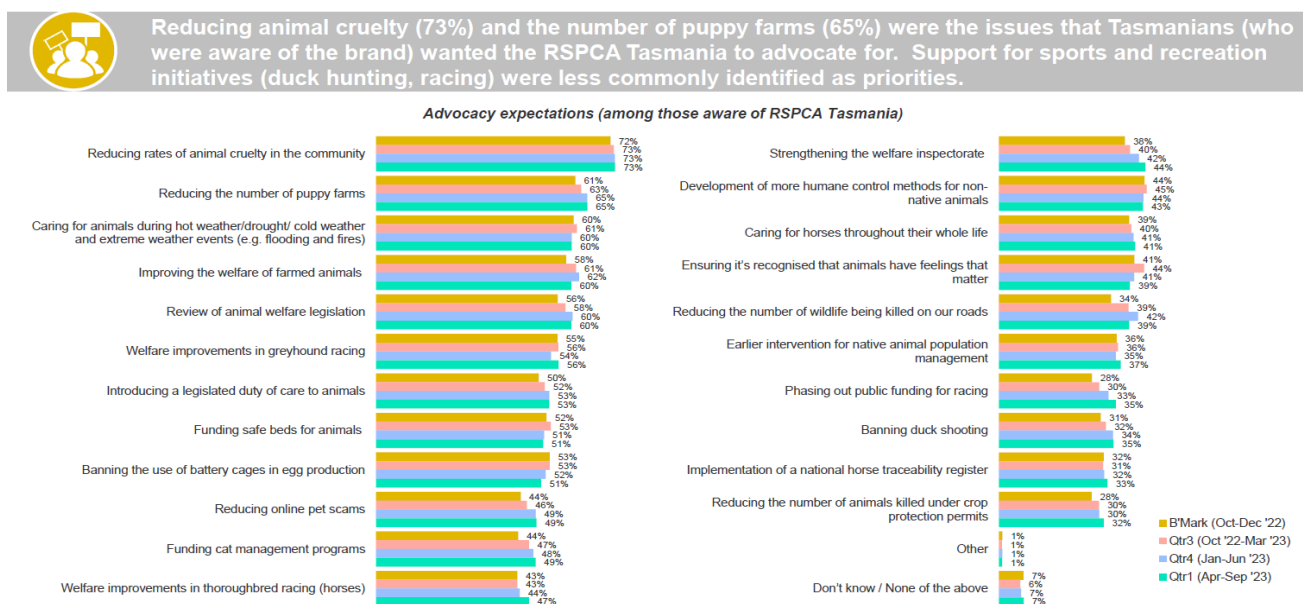


Figure 11: Community priorities for animal welfare advocacy (Kantar November 2023)

### 5.3 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, wherever they live, 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.

### 5.4 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.

## 5.5 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.

## 5.6 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 animal welfare services 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!



Contact for submissions:

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