



## Speaking up for Animals

### Animal Welfare Matters in the 2024 State Election



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## 1. Overview

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If there was ever any doubt about how much Australians love their furred, feathered, and finned friends, this statistic should set it straight: a higher proportion of us live in households with a dog and/or cat than with a child. That's right: 50% of Aussies live in a household with at least one cat or/and dog in it, whereas only 35% of us share our household with at least one child aged under 16.

Dogs are more popular than cats: 38% of the population lives in a household with a canine companion, compared with 23% who cohabit with a feline friend. Folks in households with at least one cat and one dog account for 12% of the population.

Tasmania is the state with the highest incidence of pet-ownership, with 44% of its residents living with at least one dog, 34% living with at least one cat, and 16% living with at least one of each.

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.

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.

Independent survey results show that most Tasmanians believe animal welfare is important to them, and more than 70% believe that we need to have a much stronger focus on reducing animal cruelty in the community.

So we know we speak for most people when we say animal welfare should be a high priority for our state government.

As Tasmanians, we expect our animal welfare framework to be really strong. We want to be sure that if there is cruelty towards an animal, if animals aren't being cared for properly, that we have the good legislation in place that makes sure that people are held accountable for the decisions they make, and for the actions they take. We want to be sure that agencies responsible for welfare are resourced sufficiently to enable them to ensure compliance with legislation. We want to see stronger compliance and enforcement services; recognising and supporting the bond between companion animals and their carers; animal welfare education in schools; new legislation to better protect pets; and higher welfare food production systems. We want puppy farms and scams of selling pets online to be banned; cat containment and cat registration to protect native birds and animals and limit spread of harmful diseases; ending cruel shooting of ducks; stopping the mistreatment of racing animals. The list goes on and on.

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.

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 the next state government.

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.

Some require funding; others can be addressed with changes in legislation and regulation.

These initiatives will ensure that the community's increasing expectations for better animal welfare outcomes can be met, and also improve awareness of the importance of human/animal relationships in improving mental health and community health outcomes.

**The RSPCA is therefore calling on all members of Parliament and the next state government to show the people of Tasmania that they care for and support the welfare of all animals in our community.**

## 2. What need to happen to improve animal welfare outcomes

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Over many years, governments have only rarely mentioned animal welfare. There has been an attitude of complacency which has led to decision making (and investment) about animal welfare being driven by crisis situations.

As a result, animal welfare legislation in Tasmania has fallen well behind even the slowest changes in other jurisdictions, to the point where most of our legislative frameworks are lagging well behind contemporary governance standards and, importantly, community expectations.

Worse still, no government in recent times has delivered anywhere near the level of funding required to even enable service delivery to stand still.

This must change. Most Tasmanians believe that animal welfare must become a key focus for the next State government.

Here is a high-level overview of our expectations:

### **Investment needs to meet government and community expectations**

There have been almost no policy advances or even commitments to improving animal welfare until there has been a crisis which cannot be ignored.

Funding for the RSPCA was not increased at all (not even a CPI increase) between 2018 and 2022. 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. More detail on RSPCA funding is provided in Section 4 below.

The findings of the Monteith and Murrphy reports into concerns about animal welfare and race fixing have prompted an increased focus on the racing industry. The recent video footage taken inside abattoirs is another example. This is the third time in a decade we've seen unacceptable cruelty, with little apparent consequence until now. In both these instances, this time there will be action as a result of strong demands for action from the community.

State government agencies with responsibility for animal welfare also need to be funded appropriately to ensure they can fulfill their legal and ethical expectations. For example, Biosecurity Tasmania has a backlog of some 10 years' worth of Standards and Guidelines that have been endorsed nationally but not implemented at state level.

### **Commitment to introducing contemporary animal welfare legislation and reviewing and updating policies affecting animal welfare**

The current Animal Welfare Act dates back to 1993 and is no longer fit for purpose. This needs to be replaced with new best-practice legislation.

Other Acts and Regulations need to be reviewed and amended to address improved welfare outcomes eg rental tenancy, Dog Control Act and Regs, Cat Management Act, various Standards and Guidelines, fireworks etc.

A comprehensive outline of areas where we believe changes are essential follows as Section 3.

### **Improving transparency and accountability across whole-of-government**

Out of all received wisdoms "what gets measured, gets managed" must be one of the most widely accepted as obvious. A further extension of this basic principle is that "what isn't measured can't be improved".

Access to information in a timely manner is essential in delivering meaningful change in animal welfare outcomes. This will only be possible with development and publication of regular comprehensive data sets across all government programs with an animal welfare component.

At the moment, even where information is collected, it is often not available even to agencies and regulators.

Responsibilities for animal cruelty regulation are spread across a number of agencies:

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

There is no central record kept of people charged and/or convicted of animal welfare offences. For example, the police decide not to prosecute an allegation of bestiality because of insufficient evidence. There is however no way of another compliance group (eg RSPCA) to consider whether the case could be successfully prosecuted under different legislation. And there is no simple way of the RSPCA determining whether someone has been previously convicted of animal cruelty offences by another agency.

Establishment of a central coordinating function for animal welfare matters in the state is an urgent and minimum requirement.

### 3. Setting the scene for the future

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Our advocacy plan focusses on 5 key themes:

- Animal welfare legislation reform
- Improving transparency and accountability across all levels of government
- Stronger regulation of the racing industry
- Improving welfare outcomes for wild animals
- Improving community awareness of animal welfare issues.

Details outlining the important elements of these themes are set out below.

<b>3.1 Reform of animal welfare legislation and regulation</b>
Review and update the <i>Animal Welfare Act 1993</i> (and other relevant legislation and regulations) to including ensuring that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• legislation has flexibility built in via statutory instruments in order to reflect evolving scientific knowledge (eg sentience)</li><li>• all legislation is reviewed in accordance with the statutory review cycle</li></ul>
Prepare for a clean-sheet replacement Animal Welfare Act that will ensure our laws reflect both contemporary community expectations and best practice, and set the scene for the next two decades of animal welfare regulation.
Lift the status of animal welfare to achieve a more proactive and informed approach to setting animal welfare standards, improve consistency in animal welfare regulation, and increase community confidence that animal welfare is being safeguarded. This means ensuring that the role of companion animals is recognised in all state legislation and policy including consumer protection, domestic violence, hoarding, rental properties, homelessness, service animals etc
Provide sufficient resourcing for Biosecurity Tasmania to immediately review and recommend adoption of all outstanding national Standards and Guidelines.
Amend the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> to require all councils to develop and implement Domestic Animal management plans which outline the council’s services, programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act, and management of dog and cat issues in their community.
Develop stronger partnerships with local government to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• address animal management issues eg feral and colony cats, and roaming poultry</li><li>• ensure consistency of animal control policies</li><li>• re-define kennel licence provisions</li></ul>
Ensure strong animal welfare protections by, among other things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• specifically defining “pain and suffering” to include mental suffering and distress</li><li>• increasing the powers of inspectors to seize animals</li><li>• increasing penalties for animal cruelty to serve as a deterrent with appropriate consequences for those who breach legislation - including lifetime bans to prevent convicted abusers owning or working with animals</li><li>• ensuring appropriate funding for the RSPCA inspectorate</li><li>• reviewing the scope of RSPCA inspectorate activities</li></ul>
Establish a Pet Exchange Register to improve traceability of dogs and cats across the state. Under the register, all animals sold would be required to have both a microchip and a breeder registration number.
Develop registration requirements and clear standards and guidelines for the accreditation of shelters, rescue centres, sanctuaries, and zoos
Review and update cat management regulations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• requiring registration of pet cats</li><li>• introducing containment regulations</li><li>• developing a comprehensive breeder registration scheme, including limitations on age and litter frequency</li><li>• encouraging pre-pubertal desexing of kittens</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring secure funding for cat management programs and cat management facilities</li> </ul>
<p>Review and update dog regulations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>banning puppy farms</li> <li>regulating the sale of companion animals to prevent online sales and scams</li> <li>banning shock collars</li> <li>developing more detailed guidelines covering acceptable housing, exercise, desexing, socialisation, health &amp; veterinary care, transportation, and training</li> <li>developing more detailed guidelines related to ethical breeding practices, including limiting the number of litters a dog can have, and minimum/maximum breeding ages</li> <li>remove existing exemptions from dog regulations</li> <li>developing a comprehensive breeder registration scheme</li> </ul>
<p>Establish a Pet Exchange Register to improve traceability of dogs and cats across the state. Under the register, all animals sold would be required to have both a microchip and a breeder registration number.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ban the use of animals in circuses</li> <li>Increase regulation and oversight of rodeos, including immediate cessation of rope and tie events</li> <li>Ban the release of balloons into the environment</li> <li>Ban the import of exotic animals into Tasmania</li> </ul>
<p>Review existing fireworks legislation and the impact of fireworks on animal welfare, with a view to introducing further restrictions on their use and sale</p>

### 3.2 Stronger regulation of the racing industry

<p>Ensure stronger and more independent regulation of all aspects of the industry including requiring RSPCA to be part of ORI/TasRacing governance processes</p>
<p>Mandate greater transparency with respect to racing industry welfare programs</p>
<p>Plan an orderly transition to phasing out public funding for racing by 2029</p>
<p>Immediate implementation all outstanding recommendations of the 2016 Joint Select Committee on Greyhound Racing Inquiry, the Monteith Review (2022), and the Murrhy Report (2024)</p>
<p>Improve standards and accountability with respect to greyhound adoption programs, including requiring funding to follow dogs through any accredited adoption program</p>
<p>Introduce stronger regulation of horse racing, including banning whips, twitches, tongue ties and spurs; and prohibiting the racing of 2 year old horses</p>
<p>Implement mandatory life-time traceability programs for all greyhounds and racehorses</p>

### 3.3 Improving welfare outcomes for wild animals

<p>Ban recreational duck shooting by 2028, three year phase out period, including an interim stage of banning recreational shooting on public land by 2025</p> <p>In the meantime, review the recommendations from the Victorian Inquiry into recreational duck hunting and implement programs to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve shooter's knowledge and skill by making education and training mandatory</li> <li>enforce stricter compliance levels, including further penalties</li> <li>implement a Waterfowl Wounding Reduction Action Plan, to reduce the risk of wounding rather than killing ducks</li> </ul>
<p>Re-assess the humaneness of seal deterrent devices permitted under the <i>Seal Management Framework</i> and invest in research on the immediate and longer-term effects of deterrent devices on welfare of seals and other aquatic animals</p>
<p>Develop proactive, humane management strategies for management of overabundant wild animal populations</p>

### 3.4 Improving community awareness of animal welfare issues

<p>Invest in community education campaigns to promote awareness of changes in legislation and other relevant animal welfare issues</p>
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Improve animal welfare awareness amongst young people by supporting the delivery of the RSPCA AWARE program in all Tasmanian schools

Expand resourcing for programs that recognise and include animals in enhanced human/animal relations (eg people facing domestic violence, homelessness, and mental health challenges; support animals in courts, aged care facilities, hospitals etc)

### 3.5 Improving transparency and accountability

Develop and regularly publish comprehensive, evidence-based data-sets across all government programs with an animal welfare component.

Establish more effective governance structures to ensure improved animal welfare outcomes. This would include:

- An independent Commission for Animal Welfare which develops principles for improved animal welfare and recommends policy with a whole-of-government approach.
- A revamped Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) which would provide advice on operational implementation of these principles.
- An interagency Animal Welfare Consultative Committee, involving all agencies with animal welfare responsibilities (including the RSPCA). This group would be responsible for development and maintenance of a central database covering prosecutions, policies and other relevant matters. It would also work to ensure consistency across training and deployment of authorised officers.

This is obviously an ambitious policy reform program. Realistically, we recognise the need to prioritise the items on our agenda, and to understand that implementation will be phased over at least the next term of parliament.

Over coming months, we will provide more details to support each of these reform expectations, and to identify possible timelines and budgetary implications.

In doing this, we look forward to working with elected representatives, government officials, and other stakeholders to ensure effective processes which will deliver improved welfare outcomes for animals in Tasmania.

### 3.6 Addressing community concerns

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

What has become quite clear from this work is that community concern about animal welfare has increased significantly in a relatively short time; and that people are not only ready for change but expecting governments to heed and respond to these concerns.

This work has identified several animal welfare related issues where Tasmanians want to see immediate reforms.

The most recent of these surveys was in November 2023. The specific questions and responses are shown below.

#### Cat containment

- Q - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a mandate that cats are contained to their owners' properties?  
**88% support or are neutral; 12% oppose.** (70% agree, 18% neutral, 12% disagree).

#### Remove public funding for greyhound racing

- Q - To what extent would you support removing all public funding for greyhound racing?  
**75% support or are neutral; 21% oppose.** (58% support, 17% neutral, 21% oppose, 4% don't know).

### **Duck shooting**

- Q - On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is do not support at all and 10 is complete support, to what extent do you support duck hunting?  
**83% oppose or are neutral; 15% support** (15% support, 19% neutral, 64% oppose, 2% don't know)

In each case, the actual support for our advocacy positions well and truly outweighs the opposition – and that holds true even if you add together oppose and neutral figures.

You can see that this data provides strong objective support for the advocacy positions we have been taking on these issues.

We will be actively pursuing these changes with the next state government – and these results show Tasmanians will be strongly backing us,

## 4. Challenges in delivering improved animal welfare outcomes

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### 4.1 Increasing demand for RSPCA services

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 fact, for many of us, having a pet keeps us sane in stressful times.

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.

As the cost of living crisis forces people to make impossible sacrifices, many 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 of 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.

### 4.2 Funding for RSPCA services

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 core government funding is an annual service level agreement for our inspectorate. Annual funding does not permit planning and limits our ability to recruit and retain the specialist staff we need. The quantum of funding for this was not increased – or even indexed – from 2018 until last financial year (FY23) and has still not reached even adjusted parity with the level in 2018.

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.

Our submission to the 2024-25 budget process was split into two parts, covering investments in:

- Our animal cruelty inspectorate service  
Details here: <https://www.rspcatas.org.au/event/securing-the-rspcas-front-line-animal-welfare-service-capability/>
- Animal welfare initiatives and programs  
Details here: <https://www.rspcatas.org.au/event/submission-operational-expenditure/>

This separation was 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. As such, the inspectorate should be seen as akin to other enforcement agencies such as Tasmania Police and Biosecurity Tasmania etc and funded accordingly.

In the second submission, we identified the key issues that impact on animal welfare in Tasmania, and proposed 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. Details of changes to the animal welfare legislative and regulatory framework are set out in Section 3 above.

In summary, the requested investment for the three years commencing 2024/2025 was as follows:

Initiative	Investment 2024/2025	Total \$ (over 3 years)	Agency
Securing frontline welfare service capability: Resourcing our Inspectorate	\$2,000,000	\$6,000,000	NRE Racing
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 function	\$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
<b>Total Investment</b>	<b>\$2,620,000</b>	<b>\$6,960,000</b>	

Figure 1: Summary of RSPCA Budget Requests 2024/2025 (Note: all costs are exclusive of GST)

More details of each item are outlined in the submissions as noted above.

### 4.3 Investment needed for the RSPCA Animal Cruelty Inspectorate

As noted above, we made a detailed submission to the budget consultation process outlining the requirements to ensure that our animal cruelty inspectorate is sustainable. This submission can be accessed here: <https://www.rspcatas.org.au/event/securing-the-rspcas-front-line-animal-welfare-service-capability/>

However, it is worth providing an overview of the submission to inform this discussion.

The number of animal cruelty complaints has continued to increase over recent years. While referrals to other agencies have remained relatively static, the number of reports investigated by the RSPCA Inspectorate has more than doubled over the last five years.

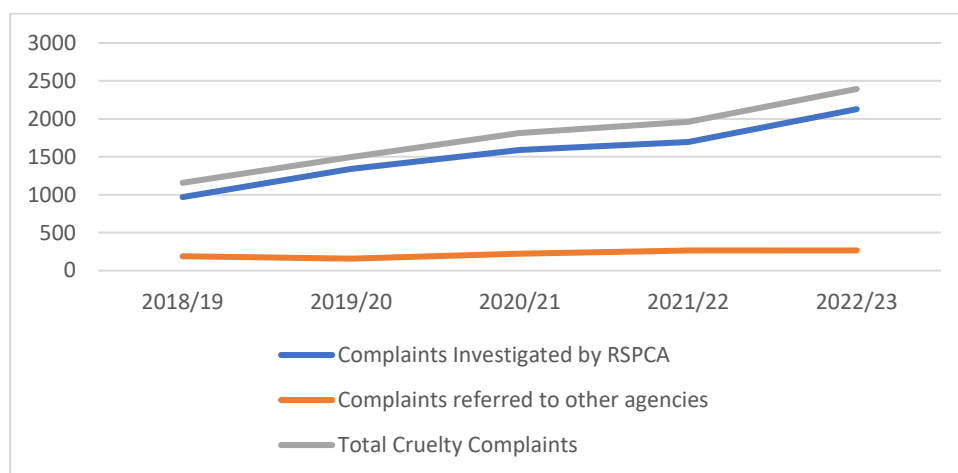


Figure 2: Reports to Animal Cruelty Hotline, 2018-2023

In FY2019, there were an average of c420 reports to the hotline per month, with a peak of c570 in January. By FY23, the average was c500/month with a peak of c580 in January. Preliminary data for the current financial year shows this rate has increased significantly, with an average of 650/month and a peak of 720/month in January 2024.

Core funding received under the service level agreement (SLA) with the government remained fixed at \$550,000 pa from FY2018 to FY23. In the current year (FY24) care funding was increased to \$650K with an additional one off grant of \$50K to assist with upgrading safety gear and equipment for inspectors. Over the same period, inflation rose by almost 14%. The RSPCA faces the same cost increases as any other business – and this resulted in significant increases in basic input costs such as wages, fuel etc. The cost of workers compensation doubled; as has the cost of veterinary services.

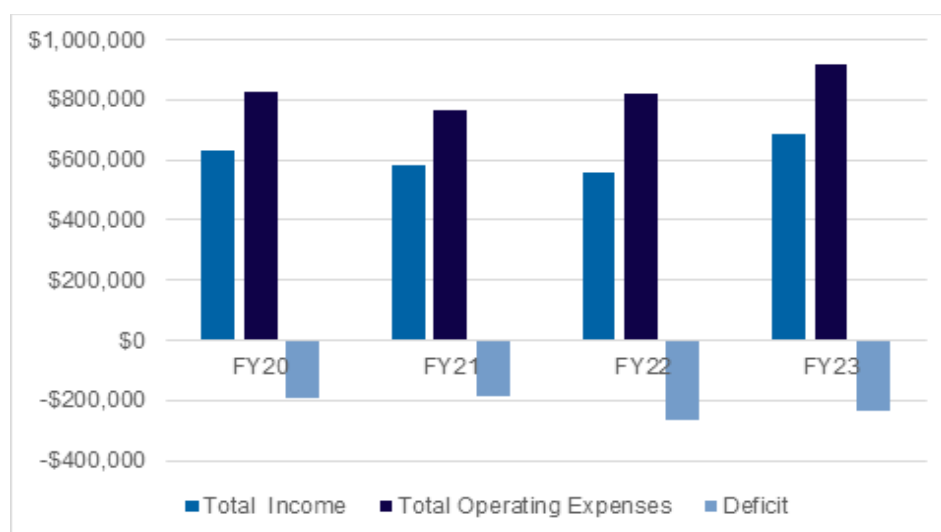


Figure 3: Costs of providing Inspectorate services FY20 – FY23 (Note: Income includes sources other than government grant eg reclaimed vet bills and legal costs)

As can be seen in the figure above, this has resulted in a significant 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.

However, it is not just the financial implications which are of concern. With no increase in funding, we have been unable to increase the number of inspectors to cover the rapidly increasing number of reports that need to be investigated. This has resulted in untenable workloads for our team members, who are now struggling under this physical and emotional burden.

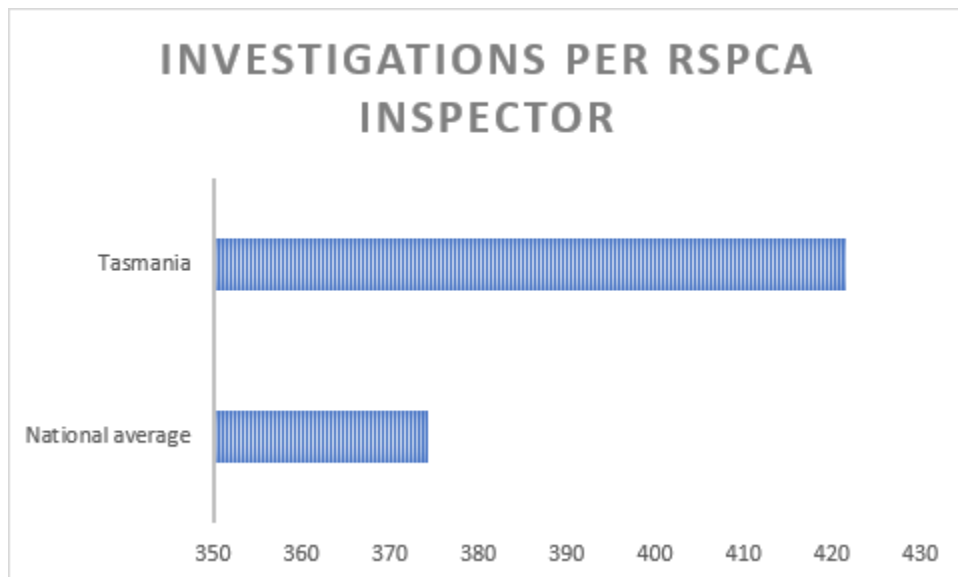


Figure 4: Investigations per Inspector nationally FY23

Over recent years, the challenges facing front-line service delivery have become increasingly complex, as have the risks to officers. This has seen most agencies moving to ensure front-line personnel operate in a two-up system (ie they go out in pairs rather than alone). Funding constraints have precluded us from moving to this model – but we can not defer this necessary change any longer.

**For an investment of \$3m pa, we could deliver an broad-based and effective animal welfare service across the state. That's c\$5 for every Tasmanian – the cost of a cup of coffee. This would include compliance (inspectorate), and expanded prevention, and outreach services.** (See detail in section 4.2 above.)

We believe that whoever forms the state government after the 2024 election must commit to at least this level of investment if it is to meet both its own responsibilities and growing community expectations around animal welfare.

## 5. About the RSPCA

### 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.

Our purpose is to help animals in most need, enlighten people, and change lives - and we have been working to improve the welfare of animals within our state since 1878.

Along with cats and dogs, the RSPCA provides assistance to a wide range of other animals, including horses, rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets, birds, goats, and sheep. We strive to maintain an open-door policy, so no abandoned, neglected, injured or surrendered animal is turned away or forgotten – no matter their size or shape.

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 to improve the lives of animals in this state.

### 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 three years and in the top ten for the past decade.

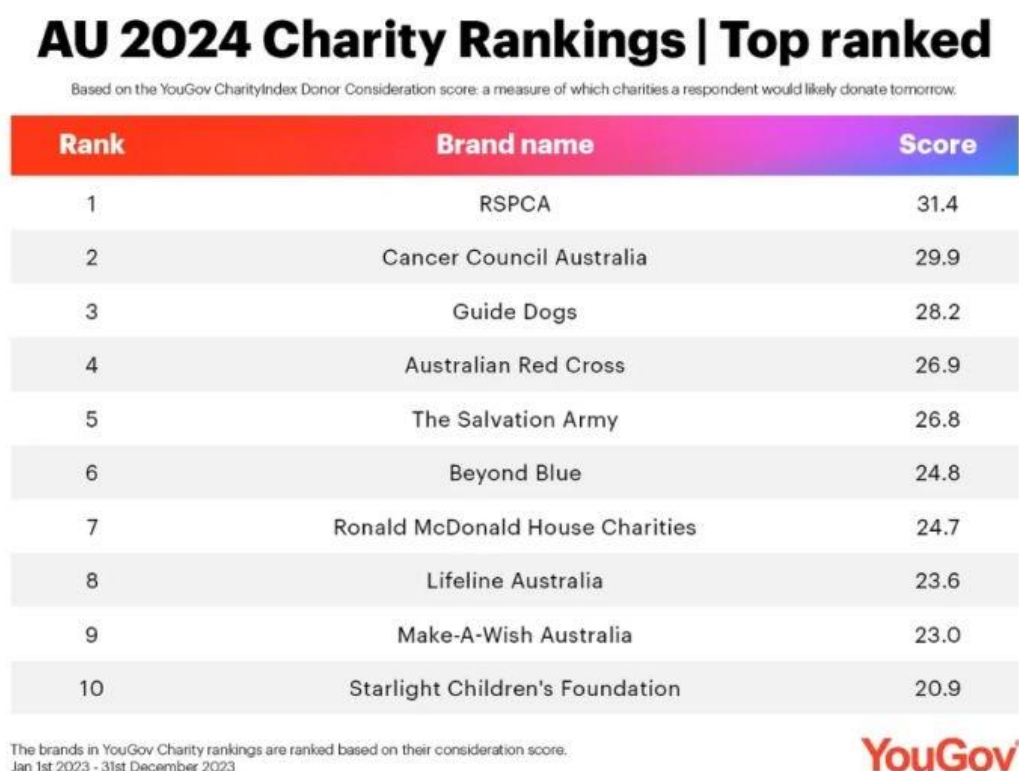



Figure 5: National YouGov charity index ranking 2024

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).

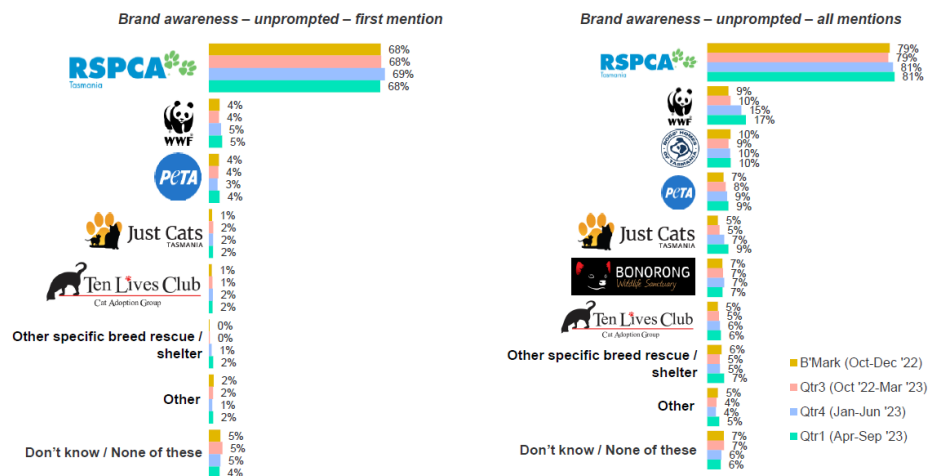



Figure 6: Unprompted brand awareness - Animal welfare organisations in Tasmania (Kantar November 2023)

The survey results show that the community is engaged with the variety of services offered by RSPCA Tasmania. The results also confirm that the majority of Tasmanians expect improved animal welfare outcomes should be a high priority for the state government.

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.

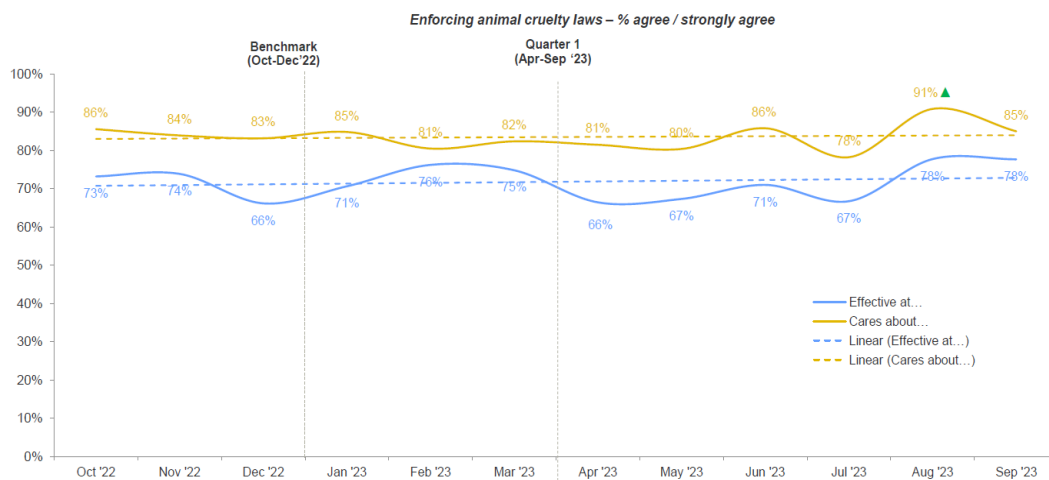


Figure 7: Perceptions of RSPCA efficacy in enforcing animal welfare laws (Kantar November 2023)



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.



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.

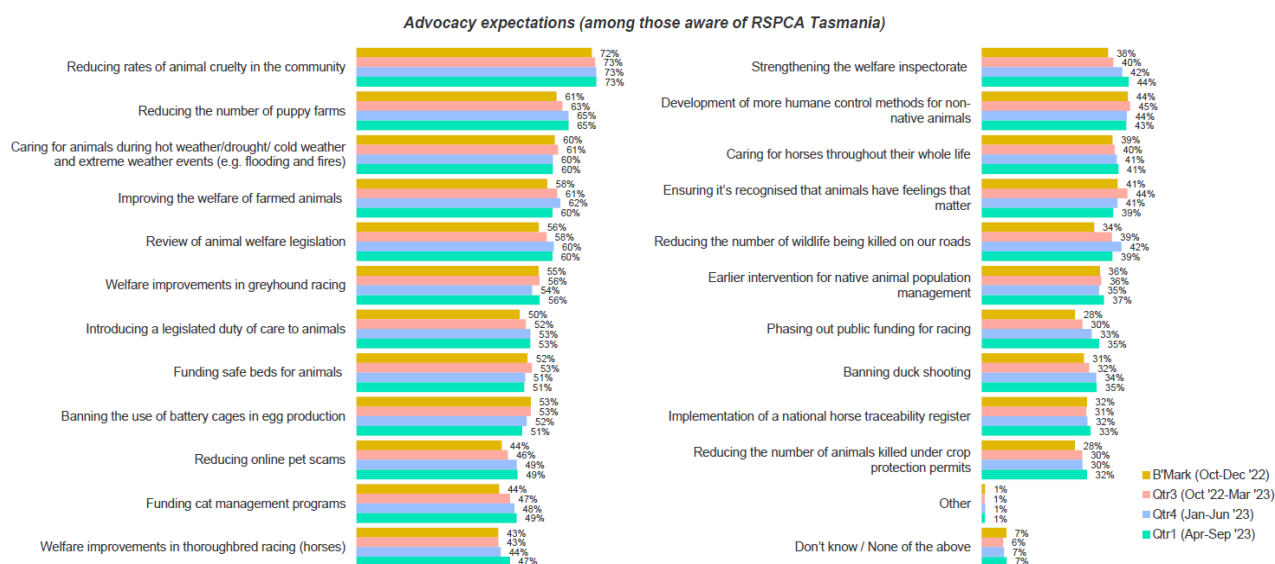


Figure 8: Community priorities for animal welfare advocacy (Kantar, November 2023)

### 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 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 Inspectorate SLA include:

- **Compliance:** 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 grant funding to deliver 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.

## 5.5 Our organisational priorities

Our strategic organisational 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.

## 5.6 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.

## 5.7 Governance

- 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.
- We have 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 further information:**

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