



Whitepaper for NSW Councils, 2009

INCREASING FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL IMPOST TO COUNCILS AND THEIR RATEPAYERS - OVER 120,000 CATS AND DOGS ENTERED NSW POUNDS LAST YEAR WITH 60,000 KILLED. THIS NUMBER INCREASES YEAR ON YEAR.

WHO FOOTS THE BILL?

ANS: YOU DO.

“As the Manager of a local Council Animal Care Facility I see the result of a system which is failing animals, cats and dogs alike. We need to make urgent changes to lessen the supply of animals so that every animal adopted into a home is valued and cared for. At the moment local ratepayers are bearing the cost of this iniquity.”

Rob Van Hese, Wyong Animal Care Facility

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1 Background

Despite the efforts of Government and numerous animal welfare and rescue agencies in NSW, little has been achieved in reducing the number of healthy cats and dogs finding their way into Council Pounds and subsequently killed.

The number of animals entering pounds shows no appreciable reduction, and in many pounds the figure is rising. This is because the number of unwanted animals is out of control - exacerbated by out-dated companion animal welfare legislation and practices founded on legacy animal control requirements.

The current economic climate has exacerbated the problem with reported increasing numbers of families surrendering their animals.

Change is being demanded by an increasingly aware public and the momentum created by the successful “No Kill” movement in the US. Change urgently requires input from government, local councils and the community to bring order and create a better balance between supply (ie breeding and sales, and responsible ownership).

Opposing the efforts to reduce the number of animals in the market and the achievement of a sustainable balance in supply and demand (where few animals would need to be killed), are the well funded and professional public relations and advocacy efforts of organisations who seemingly have a **strong vested interest in maintaining high numbers of animals in the market** for profit reasons. (*“Why change when you are making a profit and don’t have any accountability for solving the*

problem?– Councils and the ratepayer do it for us. How good is that!”)

It is no surprise therefore that the current Government of NSW opposes change – it is, we maintain, poorly informed by the opponents of change upon whom it relies for advice.

We know of a number of Councils who are currently reviewing a needed increase in the expenditures on their pound facilities to cope with an anticipated increase in animal numbers. A medium size pound (eg Wyong Council Animal Care Facility) and animal compliance activities currently costs the Council and its ratepayers over \$800,000 pa. Wyong Animal Care Facility alone cost the Wyong Shire Community \$300,000 this past year. This figure now needs to be increased to improve facilities and to expand the number of kennels.

Whilst it is essential to upgrade facilities for better animal welfare reasons (many today are inadequate), we maintain that increasing the size of pounds and facilities is the WRONG approach.

Increase the number of kennels (and thus associated staff numbers, vet bills, chemicals, foodstuffs, equipment etc etc) and more animals will arrive..because of increasing animal numbers created by zero regulation of breeding and marketing.

Increasing expenditures on Pounds doesn't fix the problem – it expands the problem, because the root causes of the problem are not tackled and fixed at source – 1) too many animals are born 2) not enough lost animals are reunited with their owners or rehomed 3) too many are surrendered by the public

- Less animals born each year will mean less animals arriving at the Pound
- Less animals impounded by Councils and more reunited with their owners will mean less animals entering the Pound and needing care and vet treatment and subsequent killing fees to vets
- More animals re-homed by Councils through better community customer service attitudes and communication means less animals needing to be kept and then killed
- Better desexing practices for un-owned and feral cats will mean less cats entering the pound
- Better use of collected animal registration fees in community education and effective rehoming strategies will mean more community responsibility and involvement (- a huge source of free-of-cost labour for Councils)

It's a supply and demand issue – today **supply vastly exceeds demand**. We are NOT saying “stop people having pets” (as the Pet Shop Industry Association PIAA continually claim) – we are saying “**get the balance right**” so that far less excess animals enter the pound system.

Solution? Reduce the supply of animals entering the supply chain and increase the demand from the public for Rescued animals (ie reduce demand for newly bred animals from unethical breeders, back yard breeders and pet shops).

Each Council has a budget for companion animal management, and a significant part of that money today is assigned to the capture, holding and the euthanasia of healthy animals.

No-one could accept that this is an appropriate use of ratepayers' funds, and we know that ratepayers, who are becoming increasingly aware of current practices, are shocked to realise that their hard-earned money is going for such a purpose.

They would want to hear that their Council is committed to a progressive more community-beneficial use of companion animal management expenditure. One that is focussed on better use of resources and finances and ending un-necessary killing.

Does it not make more sense to direct funds towards stemming the flow of animals finding their way into the pound system, rather than increasing the facilities and their associated costs?

2 Council staff benefits

It is well known that staff of shelters, pounds and vet clinics, required to hold and kill healthy dogs and cats suffer considerable trauma and stress, and this is a **serious consideration that needs to be attended to**.

The only practical way forward is to stem the flow of unwanted animals, and to improve how Councils work with rescue and rehoming groups to find more homes for the animals.

If there were less unwanted animals, there would be less pressure on Councils, their staff and ratepayers.

3 NSW DPI plan to upgrade the Code of Practice for pounds and shelters

You may be aware that The DPI is currently working on a **new and improved Code of Practice for Pounds and Shelters**. This will require many Councils like yours to significantly improve their facilities, practices and services to higher standards of animal welfare. Whilst this will be a much needed requirement in many outdated facilities that exist across the State, it will be a **very large impost financially** on Councils, and ratepayers. Since the numbers of animals entering pounds are increasing year by year, it means that facilities will ever need to be increased.

It's needed, but it's not a solution.

Reduced animal numbers borne and a better balance in the demand – supply equation is the answer.

4 What has been proposed in NSW?

You may know of the call for **an independent inquiry** into the NSW pet industry, which would provide our politicians with the necessary facts to enable them to vote on Independent Minister Clover Moore's Animals (Regulation of Sale) Bill 2008.

This Bill (Animals Regulation of Sale Bill 2008) is designed to prevent the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops and markets, which are largely supplied by puppy & kitten farms and backyard breeders. The Bill would also regulate the sale of animals through newspaper and internet advertising.

The Labor Government however, is saying that it will not support an Inquiry and it has the numbers in the Lower House to block it. The Government simply doesn't see the electoral benefit in pursuing the matter - from the DPI's point of view they've done enough with the Companion Animals Act and the recent update to the Code of Practice for Pet Shops (neither of which addresses the over-supply of animals to the market in any way).

They are just not acknowledging the depth of the problem. Why? – We believe because they don't need to deal with the consequences, which is left to Councils and your ratepayers!

It's important to appreciate that Government is advised in the main by organisations who quite simply have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo of animal numbers in the market. It is worth noting that none of these organisations have any financial or other accountability in solving the problem. Whilst they prosper and profit, the outcome of excess animals is just not their problem. In fact, vets also profit through vet fees paid by Councils and Rescue groups for animals impounded and then euthenased.

The problem is left to your ratepayers and Councils – rates, private charity donations and bequests.

It is clear that there is a pressing need to cut the healthy animal kill rate in NSW, which runs at well over 60,000 healthy animals every year. Many Council Pounds sadly are "high kill" Councils.

Numbers coming in are just swamping them.

5 The basis of the solution

This requires ACTIVE and PROGRESSIVE community education & involvement, and a **firm commitment** on the part of Councils to reduce the kill figures. This has to start with State Government taking a stand and slowing down the numbers bred into the market.

6 What you can do

The killing of animals in Council Pounds is a reactive measure, an unacceptable measure and today an avoidable measure.

In response to Clover Moore's Animal's Regulation of Sale Bill 2008 there is a call from many sources for a full parliamentary Inquiry into pet overpopulation and associated cruel mass breeding by Puppy Farmers. The results of an Inquiry will ensure that members, prior to voting on the Bill, are able to

consider and make an informed and representative decision based on the full honest facts of the enquiry's determinations.

The Opposition and Greens, and many Independents, now also support a public Parliamentary Inquiry on this companion animal welfare issue. The Opposition will use such an Inquiry to guide how it would vote for the Bill.

We must convince individual Government MPs by personal representations from real voters in their electorates and Council representatives. There have been thousands of letters sent by concerned public, but the Government, led by DPI Minister Ian MacDonald are resisting calls for this Inquiry, and have said that they will not pass the Bill.

The message is simple - we need an inquiry because 60,000 healthy cats and dogs are killed every year in NSW; this is needless cruelty and waste sanctioned by the State if they choose not to even explore options for reducing this death toll. None of the initiatives implemented over the past few years has made any difference – numbers entering pounds continue to increase, the cost to Councils and Council staff is increasing, and the massive burden borne by thousands of volunteer rescuers is not sustainable or acceptable by the public in the longer term.

There has to be a fix now, and that fix is in your hands as Councils who can make a difference.

As people who hopefully care about our companion animals and who are significantly impacted by the never ending supply of unwanted animals at Council level, we are asking you to speak up.

As Councillors and senior Council Management, you have strong influence at State level and with the DLG – for the benefit of your ratepayers bearing increased costs, poor use of resources and for the unwanted healthy animals that die in their thousands, please use your influence.

We ask Council as a body and Councillors as individuals to lobby your Ministers and local Members, and the Minister for Local Government to support the call for a Parliamentary Inquiry into the NSW pet industry and to pass the Animals (Regulation of Sale) Bill 2008.

If changes are not made to the regulatory and community environment for breeding and sale of cats and dogs ...then councils and ratepayers will need to bear an ever-growing annual burden as more and more unwanted animals are produced.

7 Summary

We are asking you to take this opportunity to demand that your local Minister and the Minister for Local Government to support the call for a full Parliamentary Inquiry prior to passing the Animals (Regulation of Sale) Bill 2008

We see nothing but benefit flowing from everyone working together to deal with the current tragic situation.

This would be

- better for Councils
- better for ratepayers
- better for animals
- better for the community

We hope that your Council can be a leader in these efforts.

Deathrowpets, July 2009

Appendix 1 the Animals (Regulation of Sale) Bill 2008

Pet overpopulation is caused in significant part by unregulated breeding and out of control marketing of puppies and kittens. Practical steps must be taken to stem the flow of animals in the first instance.

With this end in view, NSW Independent Minister Clover Moore has introduced an Animals (Regulation of Sale) 2008 bill in NSW Parliament. In 2007 a similar Bill was effectively squashed by government and industry interests (Pet Shop Association PIAA, Dog breeders group Dogs NSW, Australian Veterinary Association NSW, amongst others) who oppose any regulation that would create a badly needed balance in the supply chain of cats and dogs in the pet industry.

Clover Moore: "The Animals (Regulation of Sale) Bill 2008 would ban the sale of cats and dogs through pet shops and markets and would allow only recognised breeders, animal shelters and rescuers, council pounds and vets re-homing abandoned animals to advertise the sale of dogs and cats. The capacity of underground puppy farms and kitten mills to operate would be reduced dramatically. Their source would dry up. As a pet owner, I am really disturbed by the number of companion animals being dumped and then destroyed. I am disturbed by the way animals are being bred purely for profit. Pet shops are uncommon in Europe, where cat and dog euthanasia rates are drastically lower than Australia's.

This bill is about animal welfare, about living in a humane society, and about stopping animal cruelty. Companion animals are live, sentient beings that require long-term commitments of time, money and care. They are not consumable items to be bought and discarded when we tire of them. ... Cute puppies and kittens evoke emotional responses that compel people to part with their money. Animal shelters and animal rescue groups overwhelmingly say that the pet industry is a major contributor to the problem of pet overpopulation. They are frustrated by the lack of Government commitment to address this shocking situation, while they continue to re-home the endless supply of abandoned animals."

Appendix 2 Who are we?

Deathrowpets is an information, lobby and action group focussed on removing the reasons for pound euthanasia.

The pet shop industry claims that we and others involved in this cause are seeking to end ownership of companion animals in Australia. Nothing could be further from the truth; we and everyone we know involved in calling for change are first and foremost animal owners and we are involved from the public's perspective of creating change in the dynamics of the pet industry.

We seek happy animals in family environments and a better balance of supply and demand so that no surplus animals find their way into the Pound system. We have no political affiliation – our focus is exclusively animal welfare and a stop to un-necessary pound killing.

Resources:

- Summary of NSW Council Pound Statistics 2008 [Click here to access.....](#)
- NSW Animals Regulation of Sale Bill 2008
- Fix NSW Animal Policy www.fixnswanimalpolicy.com/
- Deathrowpets: www.deathrowpets.net
- NSW Code of Practice for Pet Shops
- Cat Protection Society newsletter: "Pets +Profits=Misery" – [see attached article, click here....](#)



You CAN do something positive to reduce the 250,000 healthy cats and dogs destroyed in Australian pounds and shelters each year

NSW 07/08 Summary - councils/AWL NSW/RSPCA NSW/Cat Protection Society

Councils NSW

Entering Pounds Total =	71,161			
Dogs entering pounds =		50,209		
Cats entering pounds =			20,952	
Total euthanased =				33,812
Dogs euthanased =				18,473
Cats euthanased =				15,339

= 3,026 increase from previous year
 = 1,139 less than previous year
 = 4,165 increase from previous year
 = 2,141 increase from previous year
 = 1,196 less than previous year
 = 3,337 increase from previous year

Animal Welfare League NSW

Entering Pounds Total =	9,671			
Dogs entering pounds =		2,857		
Cats entering pounds =			6,814	
Total killed =				5,399
Dogs killed =				1,310
Cats killed =				4,089

RSPCA NSW

Entering Pounds Total =	42,547			
Dogs entering pounds =		22,676		
Cats entering pounds =			19,871	
Total killed =				23,005
Dogs killed =				9,738
Cats killed =				13,267

Cat Protection Society

Cats entering pounds =	2,625	2,625		
Total killed =			1,435	
Cats killed =				1,435

= 45% increase last year
 = 139% increase last year

Totals					
Entering Pounds Total =	126,004				
Dogs entering pounds =		75,742			
Cats entering pounds =			50,262		
Total killed =				63,651	
Dogs killed =				29,521	
Cats killed =				34,130	

To these figures must be added:

"-Healthy animals euthanased by vets (on request of owners)

"-Healthy animals euthanased in smaller shelters

The number of greyhounds killed by owners when their racing careers have ended is unknown - greyhounds are not regulated and not considered "companion animals" therefore

THUS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ANIMALS KILLED IS CONSIDERABLY IN EXCESS OF THE 63,651 FIGURE ABOVE

NOTE

39% of dogs entering NSW Pounds are killed
68% of cats entering NSW pounds are killed

Figures below from Deathrowpets last year analysis

2006 -2007 year	Totals	Cats	Dogs
Total animals arriving:	118,558	41,492	77,066
Total animals killed 2006-2007	56,531	26,862	29,669



www.DEATHROWPETS.net

Working to stop euthanasia in Australian Pounds

www.deathrowpets.net

Deathrowpets has compiled these figures to the best of our abilities from reputable sources but cannot warrant the accuracy of these figures

Sources:

DLG annual Council Statistics 0708

RSPCA received by State report Oct 08

AWL NSW 0708 Annual Report

Cat Protection Soc - personal communication