



Australian Veterinary Association

New South Wales Division

Pounds in NSW Inquiry

Submission of the
Australian Veterinary Association Ltd

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Veterinarians are an integral part of the fabric of our community. They manage the health and welfare of our livestock that are crucial to our international trade and to the safety and security of our food, and they work in our public health sector on managing disease risks to animals and people alike. They care for the companion animals that are increasingly part of our families.

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA)

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. The AVA consists of over 7600 members of which 30% of the membership reside and work in NSW and who come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, farm animals, such as cattle and sheep, aquatic animals, and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health, food safety and quarantine systems while other members work in industry for pharmaceutical research and development and other commercial enterprises. We have members who work in research and teaching in a range of scientific disciplines. The Association also has strong membership amongst our future veterinarians who are currently training in Australia's veterinary schools.

Discussion

The AVA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the *Portfolio Committee 8 – Customer Service inquiry into and report on pounds in New South Wales* and will address the relevant TOR in the below submission.

The Australian Veterinary Association would welcome further discussion on the initiatives outlined in this submission.

TOR (a) resourcing challenges affecting New South Wales pounds, including the adequacy of funding given towards the operation of pounds by local and state governments.

TOR (b) adequacy of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales.

TOR (c) welfare challenges facing animals in pounds across New South Wales, including the provision of housing, bedding, feeding, exercise, enrichment, veterinary treatment, vaccination and desexing.

The AVA does not have the relevant information or data to comment directly on the adequacy of funding given towards the operation of pounds by local and state governments or, the adequacy of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales, to provide an informed response to TOR (a) and (b). It is critical to note that pet ownership in Australia is at an all-time high, with approximately 69% of Australian households having at least one pet (Animal Medicines Australia, 2022). Along with recognition that animals are sentient beings, there is increasing public expectation that pounds are adequately resourced and designed to ensure that animals held are appropriately cared for.

Recommendations and guidelines relating to TOR (b), and more specifically TOR (c), are encompassed in the AVA policy [Animal shelters and municipal pounds](#), which states that animals kept in pounds and shelters must be housed under appropriate conditions that ensure their health and welfare, meeting the animals' physiological, behavioural and social needs. The AVA also advocate that all animals must be cared for humanely and only animals with suitable health and behaviour should be re-homed. Further, veterinarians should be involved in assessing an animal's behaviour and suitability for rehoming.



The following guidelines are provided by the AVA.

Design of facilities

- A veterinarian should be engaged to advise on design requirements for animal pounds.
- Pens should be constructed to house up to two adult animals as a maximum, even at peak usage.
- Housing design should ensure that the animals' health, welfare, physiological, behavioural, and social needs are met.
- All pens should be secure against accidental escape. Ideally, there should be a second barrier between the enclosure area and the outside environment.
- Pens should be designed to reduce transmission of disease, taking into consideration ventilation, air flow, cleaning and other factors relating to hygiene and potential for disease spread.
- "Drop-off" boxes for animals after hours need to be adequately monitored to prevent injured animals being deposited, or animals sustaining injury in temporary housing, with subsequent delays in treatment that would negatively affect that animal's welfare.
- The building and individual cages and runs should be constructed of impervious material with a rounded contour at the wall-floor junction to facilitate cleaning and disinfection.
- The following facilities also should be provided:
 - heating and cooling that are appropriate for the needs of the animal.
 - hot and cold running water
 - appropriate air quality, ventilation, lighting, and noise control
 - facilities for sanitary disposal of animal wastes, cadavers, food scraps and similar material, with a regular pick-up of such waste from the facility (at least three times per week)
 - facilities for feed storage for at least 5 days' supply of dry food feeding and stable drinking utensils that are either disposable or able to be disinfected.
 - four types of housing areas-general holding pens, quarantine pens, exercise areas and isolation pens
 - first-aid treatment area with:
 - table that can be disinfected
 - lighting and shelving
 - first-aid materials, including dressings and disinfectants to treat open wounds.

The role of the veterinarian

Municipal pounds should develop and continually update a manual of procedures covering operational routines such as those for maintenance and hygiene, capture, transport, record keeping and the role of a veterinarian in pound management.

Veterinarians and staff who work at pounds should have basic husbandry and medical knowledge for all the species that are accepted by the pound.

A veterinarian should be retained to:

- examine all animals on admission and immediately euthanise any animal when it is in the best interests of the animal and is necessary for the welfare of the animal, provide first aid and other animal treatment, early recognition of infectious and zoonotic diseases, and disease control.
- provide advice on nutrition.
- ensure that the facilities meet suitable standards for holding animals.
- consult with management on the conduct of the pound, the maintenance of facilities and the design of transport vehicles.
- consult with management on capture techniques.
- be responsible for health and behavioural assessments of resident animals before they are rehomed.
- vaccinate, desex and permanently identify all animals being sold, preferably by microchip.
- be responsible for euthanasia procedures and practice.



Maintenance procedures

Maintenance procedures should ensure that:

- animals are fed at least once per day (and more frequently, subject to conditions and needs of individual animals).
- animals to have access to clean fresh drinking water at all times.
- daily checks are made for eating, drinking, urinating, defecating, behaviour and general health.
- animals suspected of having infectious disease are isolated from other animals.
- first aid to preserve life and relieve pain is readily available.
- facilities and equipment to euthanasia of animals, when required, is easily accessible.
- exercise and socialisation opportunities available daily.

Capture

Animal capture methods should be as humane as possible with minimal risk to animal, operator, and bystander. The behavioural characteristics of the species concerned should be taken into account when deciding on the method to be used. In general, the use of tranquilliser guns to capture companion animals is not supported unless all other avenues of capture have been exhausted.

Animal transport

Vehicles for the transport of animals require:

- separate compartments to allow isolation of animals.
- a design that allows for effective cleaning
- adequate controlled ventilation and temperature when the vehicle is stationary or in motion.
- adequate space for each individual animal to be comfortable, and
- conditions that meet the animals' physiological and biological needs.

Recovery and rehoming of animals

The fees charged for the recovery of dogs or cats from pounds should be set so that the facility is self-funding and there is a realistic financial penalty to the owner.

Only suitable animals should be re-homed. Potential owners should be interviewed and counselled before being accepted and all animals should have a comprehensive behavioural assessment before being re-homed.

The pound must be accessible to the public. The statutory holding period should be 7–14 working days on which the pound or shelter is open for at least 4 hours per day.

The provision of services by council pounds that are accessible to the public to meet these needs is extremely challenging. Some municipalities work with private veterinary practices for those veterinary practices to provide care and temporary housing where council pounds are not open or accessible when required by the public. However, these arrangements are not consistent across all municipalities (as detailed in the [AVA Submission to NSW Rehoming Practices Review](#)). The AVA has provided supporting information in TOR (k) from our members where municipal council policies, especially relating to the management of stray cats, is having a significant and negative impact on veterinary practices (both business and mental health aspects).

The AVA urgently calls upon the NSW Government to investigate and implement state-wide consistent policy for the interaction between local government and veterinary practices in management of stray dogs and cats. This policy needs to address the issues identified with the stray animal intake process to councils, the management of injured strays, including reimbursement for veterinary treatment, housing, and arrangements addressing the associated financial impacts on veterinary practices for receiving, treating, and housing stray animals.



A recommendation was also included in the AVA's recent submission to the [Inquiry into veterinary workforce shortages in NSW](#) that the NSW Government provide resources to fund a think tank to develop an afterhours model that is sustainable for the profession and allows veterinary services to be delivered to the NSW community in both urban and rural areas 24/7. This would help support private veterinary practice to work in partnership with councils for the best animal welfare outcomes.

TOR (d) the adequacy of the laws, regulations and codes governing New South Wales pounds, including the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 – Dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments (1996), as well as the adequacy of the current enforcement and compliance regime.

The municipal pound plays an important role in reuniting lost animals with their owners, the control of surplus dog and cat populations, and the provision of veterinary services. It is important that the pound or shelter is owned by a municipality rather than by individuals or private organisations so that solutions to unwanted companion animal problems are recognised as a responsibility of the whole community.

The AVA's recent submission to the [Inquiry into veterinary workforce shortages in NSW](#), stated that regular review and development of legislation is needed to support modern veterinary practice to provide protection of the public from harm whilst remaining innovative.

This is applicable to all forms of legislation, as too little attention to regulation leads to poor animal health and welfare outcomes, when standards are allowed to decline.

The AVA calls upon the NSW Government to introduce uniformity in the management and legislative controls that govern animal shelters and council pounds through the development of a new code of practice. And also calls upon progressing of the draft *Animal Welfare Standard and Guidelines for Council Pounds and Animal Shelters*, that was finalised in 2011.

Legislation should continue to empower veterinarians to euthanise all animals found abandoned, distressed or disabled to the extent that their continued existence involves suffering.

Veterinarians, as experts in their field, and governed by a strong professional and ethical code equivalent to that of the medical profession, provide a vital element - their expertise and judgment underpin the community obligation to the health and welfare of animals. Their involvement in legislation development, review and reform is essential.

TOR (e) factors influencing the number of animals ending up in New South Wales pounds, and strategies for reducing these numbers

All animals are required to be scanned for a microchip immediately on entering the pound and the number checked against all relevant microchip databases. Additionally, other forms of identification (such as collars, tags, leg bands) must be checked to try and locate the animal's owner. All reasonable efforts should be made to locate the owner, including - where appropriate - the use of social media to alert the community to a found animal.

Barriers to accessing veterinary services can lead to increased animal abandonment and therefore contribute to the number of animals in pounds. This can be exacerbated in remote and regional NSW, and also for those people experiencing vulnerabilities including financial hardship.



Strategies to keep animals with their owners by improving access to veterinary services will help to reduce abandonment and pound numbers. Information and recommendations for strategies to improve access to veterinary care can be found in the AVA's recent submission to the [Inquiry into veterinary workforce shortages in NSW](#).

There are also other areas that government can address to keep animals with their owners – these include; increased availability of pet friendly rental accommodation; improved availability of pet friendly accommodation for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.

TOR (f) euthanasia rates and practices in New South Wales pounds, including the adequacy of reporting of euthanasia rates and other statistics

The AVA included in its submission to the [Draft Report: Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW](#), that clarity is provided for *Draft Recommendation 3* (see below) that this reporting requirement is only applicable for animals euthanased in the rehoming systems. This is to differentiate from dogs and cats euthanased by a veterinarian as part of the animals' end treatment.

Draft recommendation 3

For annual information reporting to OLG, the NSW Government make the following revisions:

- a) the reason for euthanasia currently classified as 'feral/infant' be split into 'feral' and 'infant'*
- b) euthanised cats and dogs are entered into a future Companion Animal Register (CAR) if they are not already identified so that all animals are tracked within this system. These animals would have an identifier but would not actually be physically microchipped.*
- c) approved rehoming organisations report separately for cats and for dogs*
- d) consideration be given to reporting of animal complaints*
- e) consideration be given to being able to prepare automatic reports to councils on rehoming outcomes from rehoming organisations through the redeveloped CAR*

TOR (g) the role and challenges of behavioural assessments in New South Wales pounds

The assessment and understanding of animal behaviour is complex and as such, it is essential for municipal pounds to engage with veterinary subject matter experts, such as Behavioural Specialists (also known as Veterinary Psychiatrists), veterinarians with memberships in animal behaviour (ANZCVS), the AVA, and accredited providers offering courses in animal behaviour and training.

Without this consultation and collaboration, animal welfare is placed at risk. This is especially true where incidents involving dog bites are concerned.

It is a critical requirement that behaviour assessments undertaken by councils are not conducted immediately. A dog or cat will be stressed by being in an unfamiliar environment or not having basic needs met which may lead to it being incorrectly classified in a behaviour assessment. Dogs and cats should be provided enough time to acclimatise and recover before an assessment is undertaken.

The AVA recommends that if council staff are to be trained to undertake behaviour assessments, that the training provided is robust and conducted on a regular basis. Furthermore, to ensure council staff are suitably skilled to undertake behavioural assessments such training could be linked to an annual certification scheme with ongoing requirements for continued education and training.



TOR (i) the challenges associated with the number of homeless cats living in New South Wales for both pounds and animal rescue organisations, and strategies for addressing this issue.

The AVA has constantly highlighted the need for clear definitions of types of cats in NSW legislation. The AVA's [Management of cats in Australia](#) policy provides definitions of types of cat populations, as well as key points for managing cats, recommendations for cat management, and guidelines. It is however important to accompany these definitions for cat types with clear guidelines for assessing semi-owned, unowned cats and feral cats, particularly the process of assessing their sociability. The AVA are concerned that an early assessment of a cat could be miss-identified if it is conducted while the cat is stressed by unfamiliar environment and before it has had an opportunity to acclimatise and its basic needs met for health and welfare.

The AVA provides input in its submission to the [Draft Report: Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW](#) around the establishment of a community cat program with the need for ongoing funding arrangements which include formal provisions for veterinary practices reimbursement when receiving stray cats.

The great variability of individual local councils to accept or refuse to accept stray cats across NSW creates difficulty in identifying the areas of need for community cat funding (see TOR (k)). The AVA therefore recommends the community cat program funding be open to all local government areas across NSW so that the provision of support will be available in the areas of need.

The Community Cat program should consider the welfare of the cats involved and not have a primary focus on reduced euthanasia.

Semi-owned and homeless cats under such a program should receive health treatments such as vaccination and anti-parasite treatment and veterinary care if injuries or disease occurs. Welfare of native wildlife, including reptiles, should be considered in the design of such programs. Predation is one important issue. The environmental effect of toxoplasmosis, which result from a treatable protozoal infection in cats, on native wildlife occurring in urban and peri-urban areas, highlights the importance of providing ongoing treatment for these cats.

TOR (j) strategies for improving the treatment, care and outcomes for animals in New South Wales pounds

In addition to the recommendations and guidelines provided in response to TOR (c), veterinarians should be engaged, and appropriately remunerated, to play a vital role in assisting with the ongoing training of animal welfare officers, in subjects including.

- animal health and welfare
- nutrition and housing
- reproduction control
- zoonoses, infectious diseases and biosecurity (including early recognition and methods of control of these diseases)
- injuries and first aid
- issues associated with euthanasia.
- relevant state and territory legislation
- public education
- early recognition of behavioural traits not compatible with successful rehoming.

Other strategies for improving the treatment, care, and outcomes for animals in New South Wales pounds is for municipal authorities to;



- disseminate information about socially responsible animal ownership through animal adoption centres, pet shops and schools
- promote close working arrangements between veterinary practitioners and animal shelters and pounds to monitor for animal hoarders, suspected abusers, and cases of neglect.
- counsel their officers to accept that, if animals are not suitable for re-homing, euthanasia may be needed to protect the welfare of that animal.

The management of wildlife that may be presented to, or collected by, municipal pounds and their officers should also be considered. This includes a knowledge of wildlife being necessary and would include consulting with veterinarians experienced in this field, and networking with other agencies or organisations working with non-domestic species.

If a pound is restricted in its ability to accept an animal (e.g., pet rabbits, guinea pigs, rare, or unusual species, or due to local council restrictions), procedures must be in place to safeguard the welfare of the animal, such as referral of the animal to an appropriate alternative care provider.

The AVA included in its submission to the [Draft Report: Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW](#), for the NSW Government to investigate solutions for the veterinary sector to be supported for the role that it naturally plays for stray animals within the overall responsibilities for animal health, welfare and public health. More information can be found in the AVA response to TOR (k)(i) below.

TOR (k) any other related matter.

AVA Submission to NSW Rehoming Practices Review

The NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) sought feedback on the [Draft Report Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW](#) as part of the [Rehoming Practices Review](#). The Rehoming Practices Review aims to reduce unnecessary euthanasia of companion animals and to increase successful rehoming of companion animals. The Draft Report provided an overview of rehoming arrangements of companion animals in NSW, analysis of challenges, potential options for improvements, findings, and eight recommendations.

The AVA participated in two workshops and provided a submission on the draft report of rehoming of companion animals in NSW. The AVA provided comment on the draft report's eight recommendations and raised concerns that the draft report has major gaps;

- in acknowledging the role of veterinary practices in rehoming processes,
- in recognising the support that local veterinary practices provide for the community, and
- the negative impacts on the sector by this lack of consideration.

Veterinary practices often are the first port of call for many people who have found stray dogs, cats or litters and other community requirements in respect to animal care and reliable information. The community has a perception and/or preference to bring stray dogs and cats to veterinary practices instead of direct to council rangers and pounds through the important and regulated role of veterinarians for animal health and welfare and public safety.

The issues with veterinary practices often being the entry point for strays in the rehoming process but without the support to do so, is clearly demonstrated in the results from the September 2022 [AVA survey: stray and veterinary practices engagement with NSW councils/pounds](#).

The survey results include:

- 96% of respondents advise they receive stray dogs and cats at their veterinary practices.
- 81% advised they don't receive payment for looking after strays.
- 92% advised the payment does not cover the practices full costs for housing and treating strays.



Respondents to the survey raised the following key issues that needs to be considered as part of the NSW Rehoming Practices Review:

- Most veterinary practices are carrying the financial burden for housing and treating stray dogs and cats before the council collects them, which can be for 2-3 days or longer (sometimes indefinitely).
- Some councils are refusing to collect strays (especially stray cats) and deflecting the responsibility and costs onto vets. This problem is compounded by some councils directing members of the public (or rate paying constituents) to take stray animals to veterinary practices. Furthermore, several councils have told practices that once an animal is presented to the clinic they become their responsibility, including treating the animal for free.
- Many veterinary practices have reported issues of being unable to contact council after hours, on weekends, public holidays, or during the Christmas/New year break when councils are close down. This results in the practice having to house the animal until the council can be contacted.
- Councils frequently take days to collect strays from veterinary practices. Furthermore, when councils take longer than 72hr to collect the animals it can place the veterinary practice in breach of section 63A of the *Companion Animals Act 1998*.
- In some cases, veterinary practices have been advised by councils to release a stray animal back onto the streets. This request is contrary to the welfare of the animal and could be considered abandonment under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*. In addition, releasing strays back onto the streets goes against veterinarians good conscience and is in contradiction of the [NSW Veterinary Oath](#) to “*practise veterinary science ethically and conscientiously for the benefit of animal welfare, animal and human health, and the community.*”
- Because there is a community expectation for veterinary practices to take stray dogs and cats, when the veterinary practice declines accepting a stray and refers them onto council, frequently there’s harsh and damaging public backlash. This unjust backlash on the veterinary practice/veterinarian is general via direct abuse, derogatory comments on social media and in negative business reviews which can affect on business viability and the mental health of the staff.

The AVA called upon the NSW Government through this review to investigate solutions for the veterinary sector to be provided for the role that it naturally plays for stray animals within the overall responsibilities for animal health, welfare, and public health and to address the key issues outlined above. A copy of the AVA’s full submission is available [here](#).

Examples of local government policies and communications regarding strays

Example 1:

A Veterinary Hospital communication and concerns with Newcastle City Council new strays policy

Recent Policy Change in Newcastle City Council (NCC)

- NCC has recently changed their policy regarding stray cats.
- The ranger will not pick up stray cats from vets or the general public.
- This information is not yet available on the NCC website.

The Veterinary Hospital telephoned NCC in August 2023 and was provided with the following information by a council employee:

- *The information is currently internal and is not yet online.*
- *NCC Rangers have advised they will NOT collect cats from vets (or the public)*
- *One reason for this was because "there is no definition of a stray cat in the Companion Animals Act."*
- *It is up to the finder of the cat to locate the owner, perhaps by using social media, OR to release the cat back where it was found if the owner is not located.*
- *Vets are not required to hold uninjured animals.*
- *If a cat is injured or sick or there are welfare concerns, then the member of the public is advised to contact the RSPCA or their local vet.*



This NCC policy is seriously inadequate, creating many potential difficulties for various stakeholders including the general public, veterinary professionals and the environment.

General Public

- Most people are unfamiliar with safely handling cats that are not their own.
- Many people are concerned or angry about “releasing the cat where they found it”.
- Many people are concerned about the welfare of stray cats that they encounter.
- Many people are concerned about the impact of stray cats on the environment.
- Many people would find it difficult to transport a cat from NCC area to the RSPCA in Rutherford, which is about an hour’s drive away.

Veterinarians

If members of the public follow the advice and take cats with “welfare concerns” to their local vet, typical problems that arise may include:

- The cat is not microchipped so no owner can be identified.
- Social media posts do not result in anyone coming forward for the cat.
- If the cat is sick or injured, veterinary professionals cannot “release” the cat for welfare reasons.
- If the cat is not sick or injured, and not microchipped, many veterinary professionals do not wish to release the cat for environmental reasons.
- NCC rangers will not pick up the cat to transport it to the Pound or RSPCA.
- The RSPCA is a 50-minute drive from most parts of NCC, and there is no guarantee that if a member of staff from the veterinary hospital takes the cat there, that the cat will be able to be accepted.
- Housing the cat in a veterinary hospital, providing first aid and medical attention, is a serious drain on resources of that hospital. The veterinary industry is under unprecedented strain due to national and global shortages of vets and vet nurses – most vet hospitals are turning away clients and patients every day because they are overwhelmed, let alone having to manage multiple straying cats every week because of inadequate council policy and resources.
- Staff in veterinary hospitals may feel stressed and concerned to be carrying out NCC policy and instructing members of the public to “take the cat back where you found it”. This can result in the staff in veterinary hospitals being judged or criticised by the public because it is perceived they do not care about the welfare of the cat or about the impact of stray cats on the environment.

The Environment

- The impact of straying pet cats and feral cats on the environment is devastating and is well described.

The veterinary hospital recommends NCC implement the following urgent measures:

- Educating vets and the general public about why the advice of “release it back where you found it” is the current NCC policy.
- Urgently revisiting the inadequacy of the current policy and inviting feedback from all stakeholders.
- Immediately investigating opportunities for local councils to share resources such as Rangers and Pounds between neighbouring councils (for example, Lake Macquarie Council immediately next to NCC, will collect cats from the public and from vets and transfer them to the LMCC Pound).
- Unfortunately, euthanasia of “stray cats” is often necessary for welfare reasons, and any policy needs to recognise this necessity.
- Creating and publicising a clear distinction legally between a companion animal that is microchipped, and a stray cat that is not microchipped. Many straying cats that are not microchipped are feral animals.
- Creating urgent policies to reduce the number of stray cats and the catastrophic impact of this on the environment.



Example 2:

Owner of multiple veterinary practices located in following LGAs: Port Stephens Council, Newcastle City Council, Maitland City Council

Extract of the veterinary practice email to the three Councils:

... wanting to know what your current policies that are in place for strays since the RSPCA stopped being a drop off site. Please respond, so that we can develop a clear protocol for my teams to follow. I would like to know what to do in the following situations:

- *Injured strays that we can't get a hold of the owner in business hours that present to the clinic.*
- *Injured strays that we can't get a hold of the owner out of your business hours that present to the clinic.*
- *Uninjured strays that we can't get a hold of the owner in business hours that present to the clinic.*
- *Uninjured strays that we can't get a hold of the owner out of your business hours that present to the clinic.*
- *Injured and uninjured strays that we get phone inquiries about in both business hours and out of your business hours.*

Response from Port Stephens Council:

The changes that the RSPCA have made in relation to the impounding and management of strays for some local Councils has not changed the way Port Stephens Council (PSC) approach the matter. PSC did not rely on the RSPCA to manage our local stray cats and dogs. PSC use our own facility to collect and hold/return/rehome stray animals.

In relation to injured strays that require veterinary attention - Council is not equipped to look after sick or injured stray animals. The management of this situation is a matter for the Veterinary Clinic to decide on what is appropriate in the circumstances.

For any uninjured strays that present to the clinic/s that are located within our LGA and no owner can be contacted – call Council during officer hours (8am – 4:30pm) and a Ranger will collect at the next available opportunity. Please note that we are unable to collect animals after hours. For after-hours situations a Ranger will attend as soon as possible the next day.

For any phone related inquiries, the clinic/s receive – the information above is relevant. Please let me know if you would like any further information.

Response from Newcastle City Council:

I have spoken to the Senior Ranger and she has advised that if the animal is from our LGA contact City of Newcastle Council Contact Centre on 4974 2000 to have a job logged and Rangers can attend to collect when available. Please ensure some sort of stray form is filled out by the finder as we will require a copy on collection with the finder name and number and the location the animal was found in our LGA.

In the case of injured animals, we cannot transport them here to the Tighes Hill Animal Holding Facility as there is no longer a vet clinic here. These animals would have to be transferred straight to Rutherford RSPCA and have to be stable enough to travel as we are not normally attending injured animals this is supposed to be the RSPCA ambulance, Rangers will call and ask for details about injury and if stable.

Uninjured animals we can collect. Please be aware that we may not be able to get there straight away due to staffing and having an officer having to leave our LGA to collect the animal but again someone will call once a job is logged to discuss.

If people are calling your clinic for injured and uninjured animals from our LGA please advise them to take any injured animals to one of the vet clinics in our LGA during business hours and AREC after hours. Any uninjured animals please advise the caller that they can log a job on 4974 2000



*and Rangers will contact them to either collect the stray or organise a time for them to bring to Tighes Hill.
Stray animals are not collected after hours.*

Response from Maitland City Council:

Information not received as of 9 August 2023 – original request for information sent 13 October 2022, with follow up email sent 30 November 2022

AVA NSW election platform 2023

The work of veterinary professionals impacts the daily lives of all Australians and their animals in a multitude of ways. The expertise and contribution veterinarians make to the community is highly valued, essential for the health of companion animals and significantly contributes to the social license under which our animal industries operate.

Unfortunately, the sustainability of the veterinary profession is at risk due to decades of underinvestment. Continued underinvestment in the veterinary profession will result in:

- Increased difficulty accessing veterinary diagnostic expertise and care (particularly in regional and remote areas)
- Greater delays in disease detection in production animal species
- Impaired emergency animal disease response
- Impaired response to zoonotic diseases (e.g. Japanese encephalitis virus, Hendra virus)

For the security of animal industries and the wellbeing of people who depend on animals, it is crucial that the role of veterinarians in animal health and welfare and biosecurity is maintained. To do this, two things are needed:

- Support from regulators and the community to ensure that veterinary expertise and advice is integral to every level of decision making around biosecurity and the health and welfare of animals;
- Increased investment in ‘public good’ services to ensure that these vital services can be sustainably provided by the veterinary profession.

Furthermore, to support the long-term sustainability of the veterinary profession and provision of veterinary services it is critical to address the mental health crisis currently impacting veterinarians and its influencing factors (workforce retention, financial stress, working conditions, and client relations).

In recognition of the role for government in this, in addition to the information already provided in this submission relating to stray dogs and cats, the AVA has called upon the NSW State Government to support and/or address additional key areas which can be found in the [AVA NSW election platform 2023](#).

Prepared by and contact:

This submission has been prepared by Dr Robyn Whitaker and Ms Liz Gemes, AVA Senior Advocacy Officers after consultation with the NSW AVA membership and the AVA NSW Divisional Committee.

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