



14 March 2025

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA

Minister for City Services

Attorney General / Minister for Human Rights / Minister for the Night-Time Economy

ACT Legislative Assembly

CANBERRA ACT 2600

CC: Mr Chris Steel, Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Transport

Dear Minister Cheyne

We are writing to thank you for your ongoing support and to ask for your specific help to realise the delivery on the range of commitments made by the ACT Government to RSPCA ACT, including election commitments to assist RSPCA ACT to build a new, fit-for-purpose animal welfare campus over the last two terms of Government (our **Project Home**).

We understand that the ACT Government will be reviewing and hopefully making decisions in the weeks to come around the potential funding, delivery model, likely a grant and related arrangements for Project Home.

We are very supportive in broad terms of the delivery model, and we have provided in-principle endorsement in this regard to the Directorate.

We have also been working collaboratively with your team on ways to reduce the costs without compromising core capability, because as you are aware the costing and peer reviewed costing has landed on circa \$78m (excluding GST) (\$64.3m for build, \$7.3m for on-site enabling civil works and \$6.9m for off-site enabling works. (*Costings as per Turner and Townsend, 25 September 2024*)

We refer to our meeting in May 2024 where you confirmed in confidence to us that the government had provisioned \$40m for RSPCA ACT to build its facility and that the \$40m **excluded** the costs of all necessary enabling works which would be drawn from another funding source.

Indeed to date, all costings and conversations with government have been around a grant of \$40 million excluding GST to build the Facility itself.

We are cognisant of the fiscal and resource challenges the ACT Government is currently facing based on the recent Budget announcements, however, we are concerned about recent statements to the effect that funds for enabling works- onsite and off-site and a GST sum would be taken out of the construction funding. Such a reduction of some \$18 m from a proposed \$40m grant (less funds already spent by the Territory on design) will seriously and adversely impact on our ability to build a fit for purpose Facility that is used to support the ACT community.

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As you are aware, our current Weston site is not fit for purpose and represents significant work health and safety risks to our employees, volunteers and members of the public who visit us.

Further if we move from the Weston site to the Pialligo site [northern portion of Block 2, Section 14 and part of Block 3 Section 14], the Territory will be able to realise a range of benefits from the Weston site noting that the site is subject to Future Urban Area (FUA) overlay with residential zoning, Suburban Zone (RZ1) and is captured in the Land Release Plan.

Specifically, the Territory will be able to use this site for sale to developers to access revenue, which will more than offset the costs of funding a new Animal Welfare Campus.

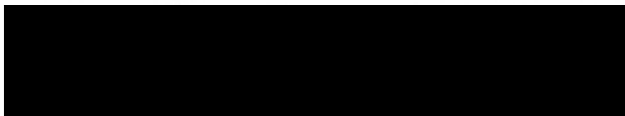
However, as you know the Pialligo site needs extensive enabling works on and off site to make it fit to build on. We are therefore seeking your support that notwithstanding the financial challenges for the ACT, that:

- The ACT government will separately fund enabling works to make the site fit to build on.
- The funding amount will exclude GST.
- Project Home will not be deprioritised, and
- That all reasonable steps, including timely government funding decisions and related approvals will be taken to ensure that construction of the new Facility can and will commence during the 2026 financial year.

It is our fervent hope that we can continue to count on you and on the ACT Government to not only keep their promises but help us to get over the final hurdles and to **prioritise** this project in moving to construction urgently.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely



Alexandra Wedutenko
Board Chair

Michelle Robertson
Chief Executive

Footnote:

For the sake of completeness, we will reference key previous correspondence dated 13/10/2020, 9/11/2020, 27/5/21, 28/6/2021, 16/9/22, 6/5/2024 and 7/6/2024 as part of the project evolution and commitments received, noting also that construction costs continue to escalate with the passage of time.