

Presentation to Estimates Committee, June 2016

Overview

- RSPCA ACT's mission is the prevention of cruelty to animals in the ACT.
- The history of RSPCA both internationally and nationally began with inspector and educational services. The first shelter in Australia was not established until 50 years after the organisation began.
- RSPCA ACT will be celebrating our 60th birthday last September.
- We care for approximately 6000 animals each year plus thousands more through our public vet clinic.
- We are the only permanent place where someone can surrender a stray or unwanted animal, other than a dog (dogs can also go to the ACT Domestic Animal Services facility).
- RSPCA ACT has the only vet clinic that provides ongoing treatment for wildlife.
- We employ the only full time licensed animal welfare inspectors in the ACT.
- We are the only known vet clinic that offers payment plans to people receiving financial assistance through Centrelink.

Cats in the ACT

- RSPCA ACT is the only place that stray or unwanted cats/kittens can go.
- On average, annual adoptions of cats more than three to four times that of dogs.
- We set a record for highest number of kitten adoptions for a second year in a row in 2014/15 and could very well break this record again in 2015/16.
- Incoming kitten numbers grew by 9.6% last year and by 12% the year before showing a concerning growth trend.
- RSPCA ACT began a 3-year free cat desexing campaign for lower income owners in September 2015 to see if we could reverse this trend.

Dogs in the ACT

- RSPCA ACT has taken in about 500 stray dogs in 2015/16 but then transfers unclaimed dogs to ACT Domestic Animal Services because of the lack of kennel space.
- Larger and higher energy dogs are becoming more difficult to rehome as the size of backyards decrease and more people live in apartments.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the number of dogs we have had to house in the shelter as a result of allegations of neglect or cruelty. We also have a growing number of court held dogs (and cats) as the result of individuals breaching their animal ownership bans.

RSPCA ACT Goals for 2015 - 18

- A. Decrease Incoming Animal Numbers
- B. Keep them Healthy
- C. Send them to Forever Homes Faster
- D. Invest in our People
- E. Maintain Community Relevance & Support
- F. Create Financial Sustainability
- G. Design a Facility(s) that Enables the Goals

Emphasis on Investing in Education and Prevention

Cost will increase for everyone if the number of incoming unwanted and inspector seized animals continue to rise. RSPCA ACT proposes that the only way to decrease the volume of unwanted animals is to invest in prevention. Some measure include:

1. Enforcement and education of legislation particularly for the compulsory desexing of dogs and cats.
2. Increase in penalties for animal cruelty crimes. We are starting to see more people ask for help from RSPCA ACT because they are afraid of being prosecuted.
3. Sustainable animal welfare education programs starting at kindergarten to reach all public and private schools in the ACT. Children learn how to treat animals from their parents. We must educate early to stop cycles of neglect and violence.
4. The continuation of our cat desexing campaign. Studies in other places say that it will take at least three years to impact the number of unwanted kittens being born.

RSPCA ACT Finances:

- RSPCA ACT is a part of a Federation. And while we share a common mission for the prevention of cruelty to animals, we are financially independent from any other RSPCAs in the country.
- All of our funding is generated and kept within the boundaries of the ACT with very few exceptions.
- The organisation has operated at a deficit for eight of the last ten years – resulting in one of the best rehoming rates in the country, but at a serious financial cost that is not sustainable.
- Our Funding sources are:
 - Commercial services – 38%
 - Fundraising/Donations– 45%
 - Government services agreement - 15% in 2016/17
 - Other – 2%

Greyhound Racing Industry

We did an analysis of online race results and other publically available documents of 784 races held in the ACT between 2011 and 2015 which featured more than 2000 greyhounds based across Australia and New Zealand. From this we found:

- 93% of local participants were based in NSW;
- Just 24 of the approximate 400 trainers were from the ACT with only 12 of these individuals still competing in 2015;
- 7 out of 8 greyhounds that started each race had NSW-based trainers.

We also found that:

- The greyhound that won the biggest ACT race of the year in 2013 was later suspended following the live baiting revelations in NSW;
- The former GRNSW Chief Steward, who was found to be directing others to produce misleading injury records, was in charge of at least 11 ACT based race days across the last three years; and
- Finally, at least seven trainers from NSW and one trainer from Victoria who have been linked to live baiting, have raced in the ACT at least once.