

RSPCA ACT Report for the Service Funding Agreement

Report for 1st July 2022 – 31 December 2022

Prepared by RSPCA ACT

a. The number of animals seized under the Animal Welfare ACT 1992

1. 9 animals seized under 81A(a) to (c) and/or s85(2) via 85(1) (a) to (c).
2. Animal types:

Canine	9	
TOTAL	9	

The Inspectorate has observed an increase in emaciated animals over the reporting period. These observations have forced Inspectors to intervene and remove affected animals from their owners to enable veterinary treatment to be provided. It is anticipated this will continue to be the trend for the remaining financial year as the volume of reports appears to be rising since the ceasing of COVID 19 lockdown restrictions.

Whilst Inspector intervention has increased, education continues to be the preferred approach by Inspectors when dealing with animal owners. Education is delivered in various ways including instruction on feeding, grooming, housing, training, etc, or referrals to other veterinary services, and charity groups to ensure the welfare of animals is at the forefront of RSPCA ACT service delivery.

3. Number of animals destroyed under the Act: 0. (*relates only to Inspector Seized Animals*)

4. Number of entries into premises under section 81 of the Act:

Inspectors were forced to intervene and enter properties on 3 occasions due to the immediate concern for the welfare of 5 animals. All animals were transported to the RSPCA shelter for immediate veterinary treatment with the expectation of 1 that was deceased at the property. The owners of all seized animals are either being investigated or subject to legal action.

Additionally, Inspectors will routinely enter the private residence of customers pursuant to s81(2)(a) of the Animal Welfare Act 1992, to enable interactions to take place in a private setting of the customer's choice.

b. Stray dogs and cats

1. Number of animals received from the public:

Felines	450
Canines	128
TOTAL	578

2. Number of animals received from the Territory:

Felines	61	
Canines	19	Note: includes DAS seized animals
Other species	8	
TOTAL	88	

c. Cats and dogs housed

1. For stray cats and dogs received from the public or the Territory, the number of days housed against legislative compliance period for the relevant Acts:

Felines	Within 7 days*
Canines	7 days*

* Denotes the minimum days to be held as 'stray hold' to meet compliance requirements.

Note: animals are released back to owners if claimed before stray hold is up, and once stray hold period has expired, unclaimed animals fall under ownership of RSPCA ACT.

2. Number of days held for prosecution related matters*:

Felines	average 0 days
Canines	average 13 days

* For animals seized within this reporting period.

3. Number of dogs transferred to DAS: 0
(Note: includes DAS seized animals returned to DAS)

d. Animals released

1. Number of **stray** dogs and cats returned to owner:

Felines	49
Canines	97

TOTAL	146
--------------	------------

2. The average number of days housed until returned to the owner: 1 day

e. Euthanisation

Number of pest animals euthanised	13
Number of cats deemed feral/unsocialised and euthanised	44
TOTAL	57

f. Inspectorate service

1. Number of reports and allegations received by the inspectorate:

The Inspectorate received 917 reports consisting of 3057 allegations of animal neglect. It should be noted that reports being made to the Inspectorate at various times fall outside of the Service Funding Agreement e.g., Outside of business hours and weekends.

The volume of allegations made to the Inspectorate is a considerable increase over the same reporting period of the 2021 – 2022 financial year. This increase has seen a greater interaction by Inspectors over neglect issues resulting in several prosecutions being considered. It is envisioned this trend will continue throughout the second half of the financial year.

2. Summary of written / verbal directions:

1 written direction was issued to a carer of an animal during the reporting period. In that instance, that person failed to comply with the direction leading to the removal of the animal under the Domestic Animals Act 2000.

The carer is now subject to an ongoing investigation with it being anticipated charges will be laid in relation to several offences under the Animal Welfare Act 1992.

The Inspectorates approach to educating and guiding animal owners continues to see promising results with no requirement for other written or verbal directions to be issued.

3. ACT Civil Administrative Tribunal Matters:

RSPCA was not involved in any matters relating to the ACT Civil Administrative Tribunal

4. Number of prosecutions commenced:

No prosecutions have been formally commenced during the reporting period, however, 6 are outstanding, 4 currently with TCCS legal, and 2 with DPP. It should be noted that matters currently in the control of the DPP are somewhat hysterical (up to 6 months) and consideration is being given to having the matters discontinued, due to the considerable timelapse in laying charges accused.

5. Summary of Court Outcomes:

N/A

g. General statement

The Inspectorate has identified the use of education and guidance in the first instance is generally the most appropriate form where compliance around animal welfare is concerned. This is evident in the small number of animals being seized by Inspectors during the reporting period, however, it continues to receive and action numerous reports by the community and the ACT Government outside of the parameters of the 'Service Funding Agreement'. This requirement directly results in impacting the RSPCA ACT finances.

It is envisioned any continued service provided outside of the Service funding agreement may require additional funding contributions from the ACT government in the 2022 – 2023 financial year to ensure the service is able to continue in its current form. Additionally, the Inspectorate continues to be approached by Domestic Animal Services on a regular basis outside of the 'Service funding agreements, with the last time being on the 26th of December 2022, (Boxing Day) to conduct animal welfare investigations.

Communications with a Domestic Animal Services Operations Manager have identified the absence of experienced animal welfare investigators in their domain leading to the suggestion that the Domestic Animal Services Ranger's authorisation as Inspector under the Animal Welfare Act 1992 be revoked to remove the potential litigation risk against the ACT Government due to the inexperienced nature of their staff. Whilst this is acknowledged by the RSPCA ACT Inspectorate it is important to understand that any decision to rely solely on the RSPCA would require additional funding to support such a decision.

h. Additional information

# animals at C/H status on 31 December	Total = 2 - 2 Canine
Includes animals in foster. Does not include DAS C/H animals	

In addition, we also included the 'Length of Stay' (LOS) for animals who were or are in care during this reporting period. Their status therefore:

- changed to or from Court Held in the July-December period,
- or are/were still in care as at 31 December 2021,
- indicates the total LOS at that status, for those animals who were still in care during this reporting period, but who came in before July 1 2021.

Days at court hold status	# Animals
0-30	8
31-60	1
61-100	
100+	1

This information was not requested, but we wanted to provide it as we think it is useful to capture.