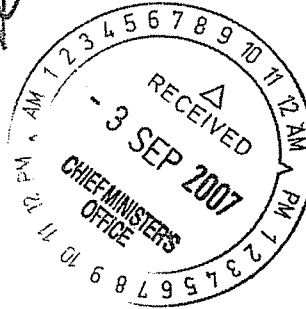




For all creatures great and small.

Per advice Head & response
V
3/9



Mr Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister and Treasurer
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

cc: Ms Katy Gallagher MLA, Deputy Chief Minister
Mr John Hargreaves MLA, Minister for Territory and
Municipal Services
Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Minister for Planning
Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Attorney General

The Royal Society
for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Animals
ACT Inc

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Dear Mr Stanhope

RSPCA ACT BUDGET BID – 2008-09

I refer to your letter of 14 August 2007, in which you invited me to provide input to the ACT Government's 2008-09 Budget process. I congratulate you on the Government's Budget surplus, especially in the context of improvements to infrastructure, education and health care.

The RSPCA receives only minimal funding through the Government – less than eight cents in every funding dollar. However, we provide the only animal welfare service in the ACT. What would happen to the thousands of unwanted or mistreated animals in the region if we were not here? The impact on the community, wildlife and the animals themselves would be devastating. I therefore welcome this opportunity to present to you my plan for the RSPCA ACT for 2008-09 and beyond and to seek your financial support to provide policies and programmes that reflect the overall needs and interests of the ACT.

The ACT Government provides the least Government funding to the RSPCA in their jurisdiction of all State/Territory Governments. I believe the sustainable economic base which you and your Government have created offers a timely opportunity to further invest in the important work done by the RSPCA ACT.




Canberra's leading
animal welfare
organisation

The attached document details the Budget submission for the RSPCA ACT for 2008-09 and the forward estimates period. Programmes and associated budgets are in addition to the current level of funding which continue to be inadequate. At the very least, current funding levels need to be brought into line with the actual costs associated with delivering these programmes, which would require an additional investment by your government of some \$400,000. To provide you with the necessary context to inform your consideration of this submission, current government funding against actual costs for our major programmes is:

- Funding for the inspectorate function is \$60,000 against an actual cost of some \$175,000;
- Funding for wildlife programmes is \$70,000 against an actual cost of \$167,000; and
- Funding to manage unwanted dogs is only \$66,000 against actual costs of \$250,000.

I look forward to your favourable consideration on this submission and am happy to provide further information as needed.

Yours sincerely



Michael Linke
Chief Executive Officer
RSPCA ACT

August 2007

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

BUDGET 2008-09

SUBMISSION BY:

**THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF
CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

OVERVIEW

The RSPCA provides a unique service to Canberra and the region. With a Budget of \$3m, the Government contribution represents only \$200,000 of this. This is the least amount of Government financial support in all States/Territories.

Of particular importance in our Bush Capital, the RSPCA plays a role in protecting our native wildlife, minimising the risk of damage by feral animals and healing and rehabilitating injured wildlife and domestic animals. Without the RSPCA, the Canberra community would have to manage an annual workload including at least:

- Homing and adoption or euthanasia of 1,300 stray and/or abandoned dogs;
- Homing and adoption or euthanasia of 2,300 stray and/or abandoned cats;
- Care and rehabilitation of 3,000 injured native animals;
- 700 investigations of animal cruelty;
- Trapping and euthanasia of 400 feral cats;
- Education and information for Canberra schools;
- Pets as Therapy support for Canberra's elderly;
- Assistance with dog walking, foster care and other support services for people in need of temporary assistance (eg: when in hospital);
- Veterinary assistance for low income earners to reduce harm to animals and to avoid unwanted breeding, valued at over \$100,000.

Most critical of all is the need for certainty as to the actual physical capability for the RSPCA to provide its services to the community. The ACT Planning Authority has advised that redevelopment of the Molonglo area will necessitate the relocation of the current RSPCA centre in Weston. The RSPCA cannot self fund a move from the area and, as such, a major component of this Budget bid is funding to enable the move of the centre, in accordance with the ACT Government's wishes, to an alternative site in Symonston. The experience of other States/Territories indicates that a minimum investment of \$10m will be required.

This Budget submission represents a modest package of measures designed to enable the RSPCA to continue to provide a service which no-one else is willing to do. There is strong community support for our work and funds are desperately needed to enable us to continue to meet the expectations and needs of animals and people in Canberra and Queanbeyan. I offer you a submission which, I believe, represents value for money in terms of providing a service which no-one else can. I have presented these reforms as separate line items to facilitate your consideration of a package of options which you may wish to support.

TABLE 1 - TOTAL FUNDING SOUGHT

	2008-09 \$'000	2009-10 \$'000	2010-11 \$'000	2012-13 \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
Operating	0.735	0.625	0.625	0.625	2.610
Capital	1.340	0.708	0.708	0.708	4.364
Contingency	10.000	0.100	0.100	0.100	10.300
TOTAL (less Contingency)	1.340	0.708	0.708	0.708	4.364

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The table below provides a breakdown on the funding sought by measure.

TABLE 2 - FUNDING SOUGHT BY MEASURE

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2012-13	TOTAL
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Operating					
Infrastructure – Building a Future for the RSPCA	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.030
Our Native Fauna – Managing in the Bush Capital	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.240
Animal Cruelty – It's Not Acceptable	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.500
There to Care All Day Every Day	0.090	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.090
Prevention Before the Problems Arise	0.035	0.360	0.360	0.360	1.500
A Changing Caseload	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.040
Pets Are Wonderful Support	0.070	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.253
Sub-total	0.735	0.625	0.625	0.625	2.610
Capital					
Our Native Fauna – Managing in the Bush Capital	0.030	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.039
Animal Cruelty – It's Not Acceptable	0.030	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.039
Prevention Before the Problems Arise	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	1.000
There to Care All Day Every Day	0.070	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.091
A Changing Caseload	0.050	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.065
Pets Are Wonderful Support	0.400	0.040	0.040	0.040	0.520
Sub-total	0.605	0.083	0.083	0.083	1.754
Contingency					
<i>New facility</i>	<i>10.000</i>	<i>0.100</i>	<i>0.100</i>	<i>0.100</i>	<i>10.300</i>
TOTAL (less Contingency)	1.340	0.708	0.708	0.708	4.364

These figures do not include indexation, which would be applied annually at the agreed CPI rate.

Infrastructure - Building a Future for the RSPCA

Much of the future of the RSPCA ACT relies on appropriate infrastructure to support delivery of our services and programmes. I am advised by the ACT Planning Authority that the region in which the centre is currently located will be redeveloped to accommodate housing and, as such, the RSPCA will have to be relocated. While we have a 46 year lease, I would prefer to cooperate with the Government to enable this development to proceed. This will necessitate the moving of the RSPCA centre in Weston to an alternative site. Symonston has been put forward as the likely site. Such a move will require investment. The RSPCA cannot fund this development and, as such, Government funding will be essential. Based on relocations of RSPCA centres in other States, a realistic estimate of funds required would be in the order of \$10m. The actual timing of this funding injection is not known and, as such, I am seeking funds to be retained in a contingency reserve, for access when the timing of the relocation has been determined.

Linked to this, \$30,000 is required for master planning investigation, to provide a basis that will ensure that a design for a sustainable facility with efficient operational capacity is produced. This cost is based on indicative information from the designer responsible for the current kennel facility and does not include a sizeable pro bono component. Since the 2003 bush fires, the approach to site development in Weston has been somewhat haphazard and we are operating in inefficient and substandard conditions. To facilitate efficient and effective use of the land available and to ensure the best possible operational lay out, an expert design for a customised centre is essential.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
New facility	10.000	0.100	0.100	0.100
Master Planning	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.000

Our Native Fauna - Managing in the Bush Capital

Domestic animals are not the only ones affected by the drought. In addition to urban development, such as the Gungahlin Drive Redevelopment project, the drought has placed immense pressure on native wildlife. The wildlife rehabilitation services provided by the RSPCA currently rely heavily on a volunteer workforce which we train to cater for the specific needs of Australian fauna. However, reliance on volunteers means that we do not have the capacity to direct the workforce as much as is often required and we lack the capacity to provide the ongoing and holistic training and education essential to the appropriate management of our unique species'.

A much publicised example of the intensive efforts of the RSPCA relates to an injured swan, which has been nursed back to health for release into the Tidbinbilla Reserve. Were the facilities and expertise not available through the RSPCA, this swan would almost certainly have died. This is but one example of thousands.

We also play an active role in working with developers to determine the impact of their work on native wildlife. As major developments are identified, we are able to provide assistance in assessing the site, determining the nature of existing native wildlife at that site and analysing the impact on that population. This is then used to make informed decisions about the development and how the needs of urban development and our native wildlife population, so critical to our status as the Bush Capital, can be brought together. This expertise proved valuable in identifying issues with the Gungahlin Drive Redevelopment project and developing management strategies.

With a growing infrastructure which branches further and further into undeveloped land, investment in a full time and ongoing researcher and analyst to work with developers is becoming essential. The recruitment of a wildlife expert is expected to cost some \$50,000 ongoing, with the need for research and continuing education at a cost of some \$10,000. The purchase or lease of a vehicle to enable timely site visits would also prove extremely valuable.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
One ASL	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050
Research & Education	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010
Vehicle	0.030	0.003	0.003	0.003

Animal Cruelty – It's Not Acceptable

In 2006-07, the RSPCA attended almost 700 cruelty complaints. We are the only organisation which responds to this need and our staff must often deal with aggressive owners and animals.

There are proven links between cruelty to animals and violent crime against people. As such, timely investigation and active pursuance of prosecution are essential to sending a clear message that animal cruelty is taken seriously and is not acceptable.

The capacity to investigate and prosecute cruelty allegations is currently restricted to two staff members, who cover the entire Canberra and Queanbeyan region. As the drought continues to affect farmers' abilities to maintain their stock to an acceptable level of weight and general health, we will become more and more unable to respond to calls in a timely manner and in line with the safety requirements which must be accorded our staff. An additional two staff members and supporting vehicle would double our capacity and enable us to meet the needs of the region in terms of managing cruelty complaints. Further funding to seek ongoing legal advice to support prosecution would boost our ability to see cruelty cases through to a satisfactory result for the animals and the community.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Two ASL	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100
Vehicle	0.030	0.003	0.003	0.003
Legal advice	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025

There to Care – All Day, Every Day

The RSPCA fills a gap in relation to emergency care for sick and animals. Through the availability of twenty-four hour care and the capacity to travel to sick animals rather than requiring them to come to the centre, the RSPCA can assist animals in urgent need of assistance. The purchase of an Animal Rescue Unit in 2005 has allowed the RSPCA to meet this need to some extent but it is clear that the demand is increasing and the workload of the Unit and of the commercial Emergency Vet Care centre in Braddon is beyond capacity.

The purchase of an additional, fully equipped vehicle will allow the RSPCA to meet the demand for twenty-four hour vet care. Additional funds for staffing to support this will be required if we are truly going to offer 24 hour care for seven days a week.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Vehicle purchase	0.070	0.007	0.007	0.007
3 x ASL	0.090	0.009	0.009	0.009

Prevention before the Problems Arise

There are a number of key components to the work done by the RSPCA to prevent problems before they occur. These include:

- Desexing and promotion of desexing;
- Maternity care for pregnant animals and their newborns;
- Education about animals and their needs to ensure informed pet purchases;
- Awareness of the role animals play in society and the need to respect them; and
- Training to address aggression and other unwanted behaviours in dogs.

The RSPCA is forced to euthanize over 400 feral cats and kittens each year. Feral cats cause immeasurable damage to native wildlife and are a nuisance in the suburbs.

The problem of excessive breeding of cats is not limited to the feral population. Through desexing, as many as 20,736 kittens over four years can be prevented. Kitten numbers can only be reduced through desexing of adult cats. The case is the same for dogs and rabbits. To manage this, the RSPCA requires veterinary facilities to increase its capacity to meet the demands for desexing of animals. This measure would allow for the employment of an additional veterinarian and clinical equipment.

Every year, many animals are dumped at the RSPCA because they are pregnant or have just given birth to unwanted offspring. Maternity and natal care are specific requirements and the RSPCA does not have custom made facilities to cope with this component of its work. The creation of a whelping facility, and similar for cats, will directly support pregnant animals to ensure safe and healthy birthing support. The on-site facility will also ensure that the RSPCA is able to care for kittens and puppies pending their placement with people and families who can provide for their ongoing health and happiness. This measure seeks capital funding for pre and post natal care facilities, the ongoing management of which will be absorbed within existing resources.

Too many people take on pets without a full appreciation for what pet ownership means. The needs of a baby animal can be significant and often a family will not think beyond the first impression made by a cute kitten or puppy and therefore be unprepared for the demands which a new pet can place on them. The RSPCA often receives animals which are unwanted because the owner did not expect them to be messy, noisy or demanding of time, attention and exercise. Similarly, some owners have good intentions but do not know how to care for their pets. Through puppy training and other education classes and material, the RSPCA can ensure that people are equipped to care effectively for their pets. This measure would create an education officer position and provide for curriculum development and materials.

Awareness of how people and animals interact within a shared society is important to ensure mutual respect and appropriate engagement. Through a focused awareness campaign with schools and other institutions, this measure would directly address issues around pets and pet ownership. This would cover such issues as dealing with aggressive animals, treatment of common animal disorders and managing general responsibilities around desexing, vaccination and animal control. Analysis of the best

way to raise awareness in the younger audience would be undertaken prior to development of appropriate supporting materials.

Dog attacks are becoming more widely reported and can result in serious injury to people as well as the destruction of the dog. Dog attacks only occur as a result of negligent actions on the part of the owner and, as such, this group must be targeted to ensure that they know their responsibilities and how to train and manage a dog. While there are irresponsible pet owners who actually encourage aggression in dogs, the availability of low cost training may address a considerable component of this group.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Desexing - veterinarian	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090
Desexing – clinical equipment	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025
Pre and post natal care facility	0.200	0.020	0.020	0.020
Pet care education materials	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010
Awareness audience analysis	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000
Awareness materials	0.020	0.010	0.010	0.010
Dog behavioural trainer	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050

A Changing Caseload

All creatures, great and small is the RSPCA theme and this has never been more true than now, with the RSPCA receiving and managing sick and unwanted rats, rabbits, goats, chickens, doves, horses and ferrets. Gone are the days of the RSPCA having a focus on mainly cats and dogs and this means that our facilities, staff skills and education and awareness campaigns need to change to keep pace. In 2006, a rabbit run was constructed at a cost of \$30,000, all of which was raised through donations and fund raising exercises. However, in the space of just one month in August 2007, over 40 rabbits were left at the centre for rehousing – 20% of our annual intake. In addition to the need to provide better housing for these small animals and livestock, staff are generally trained and competent in dealing with cats and dogs but may have little or no experience in dealing with other animals coming to the centre.

The change and growth in caseload of small animals and livestock requires specific facilities and staff training in order to manage this community need effectively.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Facility upgrade	0.050	0.005	0.005	0.005
Education	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010

Pets Are Wonderful Support - PAWS

The Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) programme provides short term support to enable eligible people in Canberra and Queanbeyan to keep their pets. Assistance can take many forms, including:

- Foster care for pets;
- Boarding services for pets;
- Feeding pets;
- Walking dogs.

These services are provided free of charge to eligible people, generally those with limited funds available, and each package of assistance is individually determined. Assistance is generally sought due to temporary hardship which prevents the owner from providing complete care for their pet. For example, if a hospital stay or recovery period impacts on a person's ability to support their pet to the usual level, PAWS may be accessed to help with this.

Pets and animals are recognised as providing therapeutic support to people who are ill or elderly. The interaction with a domesticated animal can assist in recovery and ease depression. However, our ability to offer this support is reliant on volunteer assistance and the programme requires review and coordination if it is to continue to assist clients. A dedicated coordinator to work with volunteers and clients would enable the programme to continue and to be targeted to those most in need. Increased capacity for temporary boarding of dogs and cats is also essential.

With a network of volunteers and a constantly changing client caseload, accurate management of information to ensure a "best fit" between clients and volunteers is essential. Dealing with such a sensitive set of issues, the development of a database would reduce the risk of error and allow speedy response to individual need. Modest funding to create an appropriate IT format for the database would much improve our capacity in this regard.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
PAWS coordinator	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050
PAWS database	0.010	0.001	0.001	0.001
Boarding facility	0.040	0.004	0.004	0.004
Information material	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010

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