



Animal Shelter Review

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1. Executive Summary

The Wingcarabee Animal Shelter is located within the confines of the Resource Recovery Centre at Moss Vale. The current Animal Shelter has served the community for 19 years at its present location. The buildings are a mixture of temporary structures, including portable office buildings, shipping containers for storage of goods, shedding containing cat condos for the housing of cats and two (2) concrete dog kennels.

Despite the challenges presented by the site there is clearly a compassion and commitment to care for the animals exhibited in both the staff and all the volunteers that ensures that all the animals are provided with a high-level care and the best possible chances of rehoming and adoption.

The Site

The existing site presents many environmental challenges ranging from air quality and offensive odours to green waste catching fire nearby, and from compromised physical access to the Shelter to a potentially polluted spray from a nearby aerated dam. The activities that can be conducted on the site are strictly governed by an EPA (Environment Protection Authority) license across the entire site. Simple installations like that of the re-purposed bus shelter that provides shade and respite for the volunteers took many months to progress and establishing a required sewer connection that would prevent the overland flow of polluted water from the washing down the kennels is still outstanding.

The Facility

The facility is made up of several temporary structures which provide cramped working conditions and, at best, basic facilities for staff and volunteers. The facility looks tired and neglected and needs urgent maintenance and significant upgrades if it is to comply with accepted standards. The site and the facility as a whole are in urgent need of a thorough review from a suitably qualified expert who can advise on WHS compliance and prepare an upgrade plan to ensure compliance with appropriate standards.

Staffing – Delegations and Decision Making

Vacant positions have not been filled resulting in pressure on existing staff. The failure to fill vacant positions and lack of asset maintenance adds to the volunteers' perception that Council simply doesn't care. Senior staff and the team leader have not been empowered to make strategic decisions or provided with access to fundamental information that would enable them to fulfill their core responsibilities as leaders. An increased level of business support has been identified as essential to improving business operations. This will help with the ongoing and accurate entry of data, the maintenance of donation inventories, fuller reporting of WHS concerns, and in updating and innovating social media to expand opportunities for the rehoming and adoption of animals

Volunteers

Volunteers provide significant support to the operations of the Shelter both financially and in the donated hours they spend with individual animals in enhancing their wellbeing. The volunteers feel neglected and highlight numerous examples of poor or non-existent communication from Council, not being listened to, ideas being dismissed, not being valued and an overall ambivalence to their efforts. The frustration experienced by the volunteers is leading to tension with Council and various media channels are being used to express concerns

with or lobby Council. Volunteers are anxious about the decline of the Shelter and are concerned that Council does not provide any certainty about its future. This leads volunteers to seek solutions beyond traditional communication channels, further exacerbating tensions.

FOWAS raises the awareness of the Animal Shelter in the local community and collects significant material donations and finances to support the operation of the Animal Shelter. FOWAS also holds funds donated by the local community that will be targeted at construction of the new facility should it proceed. The Memorandum of Understanding with FOWAS should be renewed, with a focus on the funds raised by the group being utilised to provide services beyond the statutory responsibilities of Council, ensuring the best possible preparation for rehoming and the wellbeing of the animals in Council care.

Overall, the decline in the relationship between council and the volunteers needs urgent attention. The capacity of volunteers needs to be harnessed and their endeavours rewarded – for the benefit of the volunteers, Council, the community as a whole and ultimately the animals in Council’s care.

The Euthanasia Policy

The Euthanasia Policy is widely supported and complies with statutory guidelines and the NSW Animal Welfare Code Practice Note 5. Minimal euthanasia is widely practiced in animal shelters across NSW and a number of shelters are very close to, or achieve, the goal of only euthanising feral animals or those that are dangerous, sick or seriously injured. The support of FOWAS adds to Council’s capacity to achieve this goal by contributing to the cost of medical interventions where they are likely to increase re-homing prospects.

ShelterBuddy®

ShelterBuddy® is a propriety software system primarily designed for stand-alone Animal Shelters with a focus on the operations of the centre and its animals. It does not integrate with Council’s broader information management systems. There is little awareness of the system inside Council. The lack of integration provides little capacity for oversight of the data entered, any ability to automate the escalation of issues and decision making and little capacity to audit the system outside the immediate staff in the Shelter environment. This is not desirable for a range of reasons ranging from the capacity to quickly identify and correct errors to reducing the potential for theft and fraud. There is a need to undertake a mapping process to clearly identify workflows and seek a more integrated IT solution.

Recommendations

1. Engage an expert in WHS to undertake a thorough audit of the Animal Shelter site and buildings and develop a proactive action plan to implement needed upgrades as a matter of urgency
2. Continue to promote and encourage the reporting of WHS concerns at the shelter and its environs and ensure consideration of the underlying cause of the incident and the corrective action needed to remedy it, not simply a description of the event and the treatment of the injury
3. Senior staff should liaise with the government body responsible for oversight of the EPA Licence on the site with a view to securing an alternative public access point to the Shelter

4. Having regard for the current challenges provided by the Shelter's co location with the Resource Recovery Centre, provide greater certainty to the community about the long-term future of the Animal Shelter and its preferred management model as soon as practicable
5. Expedite the construction and installation of a ramp to provide access to the new demountable office building on the existing site and secure certification for occupation
6. In partnership with the volunteer groups, develop an affordable prioritised asset maintenance / renewal plan for the existing site with a view to implementing a strategic approach to the life of the asset, having regard to the decision made at recommendation 4 above
7. Adopt a refreshed Vision, Goal and Strategies for the Animal Shelter
8. Review and update Council's Volunteer Policy and Procedures (example attached at Appendix C)
9. Update and implement a new induction program for volunteers – seek input from existing volunteers
10. Undertake a review of the Shelter's staffing complement with a view redesigning the structure to better meet the emerging needs of the unit and its business support requirements
11. Update the Shelter's web pages to reflect the updated Vision, Goal and Strategies
12. Provide opportunities for increased volunteer involvement with and on social media pages with the animals they care for, and ensure regular, twice weekly at a minimum, updating of social media pages so that they accurately reflect the current situation in relation to animals available for rehoming and adoption. Remove animals as soon as they are adopted.
13. Seek to recruit a team member from the Communities / Communications area of Council who can mentor staff at the shelter in volunteer engagement
14. Implement regular meetings that bring together both the volunteer groups to ensure clear and consistent messaging and active engagement
15. Seek to innovate the 'public view' of the shelter
 - a. Investigate the use of informative 'dashboards' on the web site and at the public desk
 - b. Network with other Shelters to investigate how they are using new technology to promote animals available for adoption
16. Ensure an asset register is created and that all donations are recorded as they enter and leave the site.
17. Introduce a procedure to record assets that are removed from stores on site and record proceeds from the sale of goods
18. Seek to move the recycling of bottles to an alternative off site location and introduce monitoring and recording of the funds raised through this avenue
19. Meet with FOWAS with a view to renewing the Memorandum of Understanding between FOWAS and Council:
 - a. Seek to simplify the MOU where possible
 - b. Council responsibilities should focus on statutory responsibilities
 - c. FOWAS responsibilities should focus on the provision of additional services beyond Council's statutory requirements
 - d. Review the clause on the use of social media to focus content on:

- i. The promotion of the welfare of animals
 - ii. Positively promoting the partnership between Council and volunteers in the interest of the welfare of animals.
20. That the current Euthanasia Policy be endorsed, and its ongoing implementation supported subject to the inclusion of the following clause:

The decision to euthanise an animal that is unable to be rehomed within a reasonable time frame be escalated to the Coordinator – Regulatory Services in consultation with a veterinarian.
21. Develop a clear and reasonable time frame for establishing when consideration of euthanasia will occur for animals that are unable to be re-homed / adopted or transferred to partner animal welfare groups
22. Staff working in the Animal Shelter should be provided with delegations under the Impounding Act 1993 and Companion Animals Act 1998 as a matter of urgency
23. Training in dealing with difficult people should be added to the training calendars of Shelter staff at the time of annual performance reviews
24. Undertake a Process Mapping project to define work activities and better specify the IT needs of the Unit in order to source or develop an IT solution that better meets the needs of the Animal Shelter and its effective integration with broader Council systems

2. Project Brief

At the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 23 June 2021, the Interim Administrator requested a review of the current operation of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter particularly in relation to:

- a) Compliance with statutory obligations and review of Council alternatives to euthanasia policy in relation to the levels of service and service standards;
 - Delegations, decision making, responsibilities.
 - Review of Shelter Buddy (impounded and reportable to Office of Local Government)
 - Review of vet services provided against impounded animals (Shelter Buddy)
 - Review of Payments received for surrendered, released and impounded animals.
- b) Review of the Memorandum of understanding between the Friends of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (FOWAS) and Council, the contents, validity and deviations from statutory obligations.
- c) The role of Volunteer organisations, their structure and responsibilities including accessibility to operational information. The collection of donations (obligations), use of social media, websites, sponsorship, record keeping and financial declarations.
- d) The Operational model of the animal shelter and the level of service benchmarked against similar sized Councils
- e) Work Health and Safety conditions for staff and volunteers,
 - PPE and environmental conditions,
 - Adequate and accessible facilities,
 - Infection control, handwashing facilities,
 - Other identified risks,

This review will require analysis of Council's obligations in providing an animal shelter service with regard to legislation and associated regulations, guidelines and Council policy. Council's statutory obligations should be considered in the evaluation of the current operational model, service levels and service standards. Additionally, the evaluation should also consider the Memorandum of Understanding between Council and the Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter and the role of volunteer organisations at the Shelter.

The review should consider if Council is complying with its statutory obligations and if the appropriate level of service is being provided at the Animal Shelter.

It is anticipated that this review will require a desktop analysis of key documents, a site inspection, as well as staff and stakeholder engagement.

3. Background

Animal Shelter Snapshot

The Animal Shelter is located within the confines of the Resource Recovery Centre at Moss Vale. The current animal shelter has served the community for 19 years at its present location. The location is constrained by an EPA licence that governs the activities allowed to take place on the site. The buildings are a mixture of temporary structures including portable office buildings, shipping containers for storage of goods, shedding containing cat condos for the housing of cats and two (2) concrete dog kennels.

As part of the adoption of the Operational Plan and Budget 2020/21, Council resolved to authorise the creation of an Animal Shelter reserve to be established with an opening balance of \$5.2 Million. Capacity studies and concept plans have been undertaken by Council for the future development.

Employment and Staffing

The current organisation structure for the Shelter provides for a Team Leader Shelter Operations, a Senior Shelter Operations Assistant (currently vacant), 2 Shelter Operations Assistants and a Business Support Officer (currently vacant).

The total budgeted hours within the Operational Plan for the Animal Shelter are 176 hours per week.

In addition to the employed staff, volunteers also assist with dog exercising and enrichment and cat socialisation on a daily basis including weekends and public holidays. An independently incorporated group (Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter – FOWAS) also assists in raising funds for the shelter, the provision of food and bedding and additional veterinary services that assist in the rehoming of animals.

Volunteer Organisations

There are currently two main volunteer groups associated with Councils Animal Shelter,

- The Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (FOWAS)
- Registered Council volunteers including the dog walking group and cat cuddlers.

Relevant Legislation and Guidelines for Animal Boarding Facilities

Animal Shelters are required to comply with a number of statutory instruments:

- Local government Act 1993 (NSW)
- Companion Animals Act 1998
- Impounding Act 1993
- NSW Department of Primary Industries- NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice -5
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011

4. Review of Legislative Requirements and Council Policies

Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)

Chapter 5 Section 22 (other functions) of the Local Government Act 1993 states that a council has the functions conferred or imposed on it by or under any other Act or law.

These include functions of the Impounding Act 1993 and Companion Animals Act 1998 relating to registration and control and the impounding of animals and articles.

Links to the Impounding Act 1993 and the Companion Animals Act 1998 are provided below:

Impounding Act 1993

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1993-031#pt.4>

The key sections of the Act that relate to this review are as follows:

Part 2 Impounding of animals and articles

- **Division 1 General provisions concerning impounding**

- 5 Who can impound and what can be impounded**

- (1) Impounding officers can impound certain animals and articles, as provided by this Act.

Part 3 How impounded items are to be dealt with (also see NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and cats in animal boarding establishment)

- **21 Care of impounded animals**

- (1) An impounding authority has a duty to ensure that every impounded animal held at its pound—
 - (a) is provided with adequate food, water and veterinary care, and
 - (b) is kept in a place that is well drained and maintained in a clean condition, and
 - (c) is provided with adequate shade for the climatic conditions, and
 - (d) is kept secure, and
 - (e) is separated from other animals that are diseased or, if the animal is or appears to be diseased, is kept separate from other animals.

- **Part 4 Establishing pounds**

- 28 Impounding authority can establish public or private pounds**

- (1) An impounding authority may establish one or more pounds on land in its area of operations or under its control, and may close any such pound. A pound may be established as a public pound or as a private pound.
 - (2) A public pound is for the use of the impounding authority that established it, members of the public and other impounding authorities (in accordance with arrangements under section 29). A private pound is for the use only of the impounding authority that established it.
 - (3) An impounding authority is responsible for the management and operation of a pound that it establishes.

- 29 Arrangements between authorities for use of pounds**

- An impounding authority may make use of a public pound established by another impounding authority if there are arrangements in place between the two authorities that authorise that use.

Companion Animals Act 1998

A link to the Companion Animals Act 1998 is provided below:

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1998-087#sec.5>

The key components of the Companion Animals Act that relate to this review are as follows:

Division 6 Declaration of dogs as restricted dogs

- 58A Notice of intention to declare dog to be restricted dog
- 58C Authorised officer may declare dog to be restricted dog
- 58D Authorised officer to notify dog owner of decision and consequences

Division 7 Other provisions relating to dangerous, menacing and restricted dogs

- 58G Power to seize and destroy dangerous, menacing or restricted dog in certain circumstances
 - (1) Seizing dangerous, menacing or restricted dog that attacks: An authorised officer may seize a dangerous, menacing or restricted dog if the dog attacks or bites a person or animal (other than vermin) without provocation.
 - (1A) Seizing dangerous dog if certain control requirements not complied with: An authorised officer may seize a dangerous dog if the requirements referred to in section 51 (1) (c), (c1) or (e) are not complied with in relation to the dog.
 - (1B) Seizing menacing dog if certain control requirements not complied with: An authorised officer may seize a menacing dog if the requirements referred to in section 51 (1A) (b) or (c) are not complied with in relation to the dog on at least 2 separate occasions over any period of 12 months (whether or not each occasion relates to the same requirement).

Part 7 Procedures for dealing with seized or surrendered animals

Note - This Part generally applies in relation to companion animals that are seized under the authority of this Act or that otherwise end up at council pounds.

If companion animals (other than those seized under the authority of this Act) end up at a council pound (eg by being surrendered or abandoned), they may be dealt with by the pound operator under this Part.

62 Seized animals must be delivered to owner, council pound or approved premises

63 Owner of seized or surrendered animal to be notified

64 Unclaimed seized or surrendered animal may be sold or destroyed

- (1) If a seized animal (including an animal delivered to a council pound under section 63A) or a surrendered animal (other than an animal surrendered by its owner) has not been claimed, the council may sell or destroy the animal—
 - (a) if notice under section 63 (1) or (1A) has been given—after the period of 14 days following the giving of the notice, or
 - (b) if such a notice is not required to be given—after the animal has been held at the council pound for a period of 7 days.

64A Animals surrendered by owners may be sold or destroyed

- (2) Before destroying a surrendered animal as authorised by subsection (1), it is the duty of the council concerned to consider whether there is an alternative action to that of destroying the animal and (if practicable) to adopt any such alternative.

67A Reporting on pound activities

The Departmental Chief Executive may require a council to report to the Departmental Chief Executive on any matter relating to the activities of a council pound operated by the council or the council's agent.

NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments

This code sets standards for the care and management of dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments. It applies to the welfare of dogs and cats held and cared for at an animal boarding establishment.

Establishments which provide commercial boarding services, Council Pound services and veterinary hospital services must comply with the standards of this code.

A link to this code is provided below:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/animal-welfare/animal-care-and-welfare/other/companion-animal-files/nsw-animal-welfare-code-of-practice-no-5-dogs-and-cats-in-animal-boarding-establishments>

The Animal Welfare code of Practice is designed for everyone involved in the holding and care of dogs and cats for boarding. *By adhering to the code, people involved in the animal boarding industry demonstrate to the general community their concern for the welfare of the animals in their care which is required by Part 3 Section 21 of the Impounding Act.*

The code contains a comprehensive list of specifications summarised under the following headings:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibilities of the manager• Animal housing<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Location○ Construction○ Size○ Drainage○ Temperature○ Noise.○ Lighting○ Ventilation○ Bedding○ Security• Hygiene<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Cleaning and disinfection○ Pest Control○ Waste Disposal○ Litter Trays• Management<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Care of Animals○ Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health care<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Disease Prevention○ Health Checks○ Veterinary Care○ Isolation○ Euthanasia• Diet<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Food○ Water• Exercise<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Exercise for dogs○ Exercise for cats• Transport• Disposal of animals
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Council Policies

Euthanasia Policy

The Wingecarribee Animal Shelter – Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy was adopted by Council on 11 December 2019. The objective and policy statement are outlined below:

Objective

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that management of companion animals impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter, and where necessary the euthanasia of those animals, complies with the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (the Act), the *Companion Animals Regulation 2018* (the Regulation) and any guidelines as issued by the Chief Executive of the NSW Dept of Local Government.

Policy Statement

Wingecarribee Shire Council:

- Is committed to rehoming all healthy, behaviourally sound companion animals impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter
- Aims to minimise the euthanasia of companion animals impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter by considering all possible alternatives to euthanasia and where practicable adopting these alternatives
- Recognises that euthanasia of feral and infant companion animals within the legislated holding period may be necessary under veterinary advice

Community Strategic Plan

The Wingecarribee Community Strategic Plan (CSP) seeks to foster volunteering in a range of Council's operations and includes the following goals:

Section 2 People

2.2 We are an inclusive community which actively reduces barriers for participation in community life

2.2.2 Actively foster a spirit of participation and volunteering by addressing key barriers

Non government groups and organisation are identified in the CSP as partners in achieving this goal and a measure of success is the level of participation in volunteering activities.

NSW Government – Premier's 14 Priorities & Volunteering Policy 2020 - 2030

The NSW Government adopted a new volunteering policy covering the 10-year period 2020 – 2030 last year. A link to the policy is provided below:

https://www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/784273/NSW-Volunteering-Strategy-2020-2030.pdf

The policy highlights the fact that a healthy culture of volunteering is vital in the creation of a socially inclusive resilient community. Volunteering is a strategy of empowerment at an

individual and community level, which aligns with NSW Premier's 14 priorities and contributes to building strong and resilient communities.

The Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter and the volunteer dog walkers and cat cuddlers undoubtedly contribute significantly to the achievement of the above goals.

5. Comparative Information

Office of Local Government - Animal Shelters / Pounds

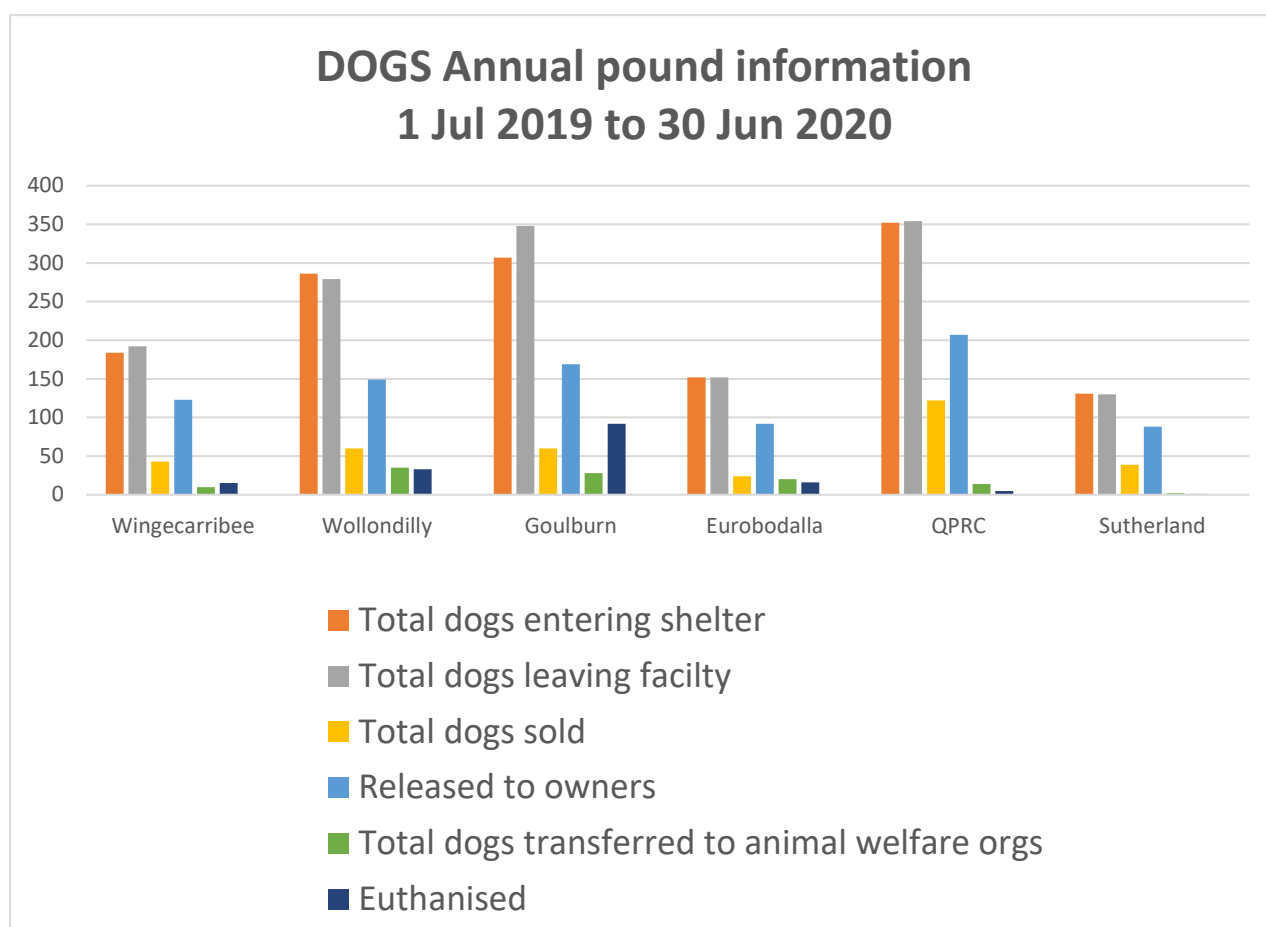
The following charts provide comparative information with surrounding council areas. Included for comparison purposes is the Sutherland Shire Shelter's information. Also included in the figures for the Sutherland Shelter are animals from the Sydney City area for whom Sutherland Shire provides the shelter service.

Note - Eurobodalla provides a 'holding' pound type service rather than a shelter

LGA Council Populations

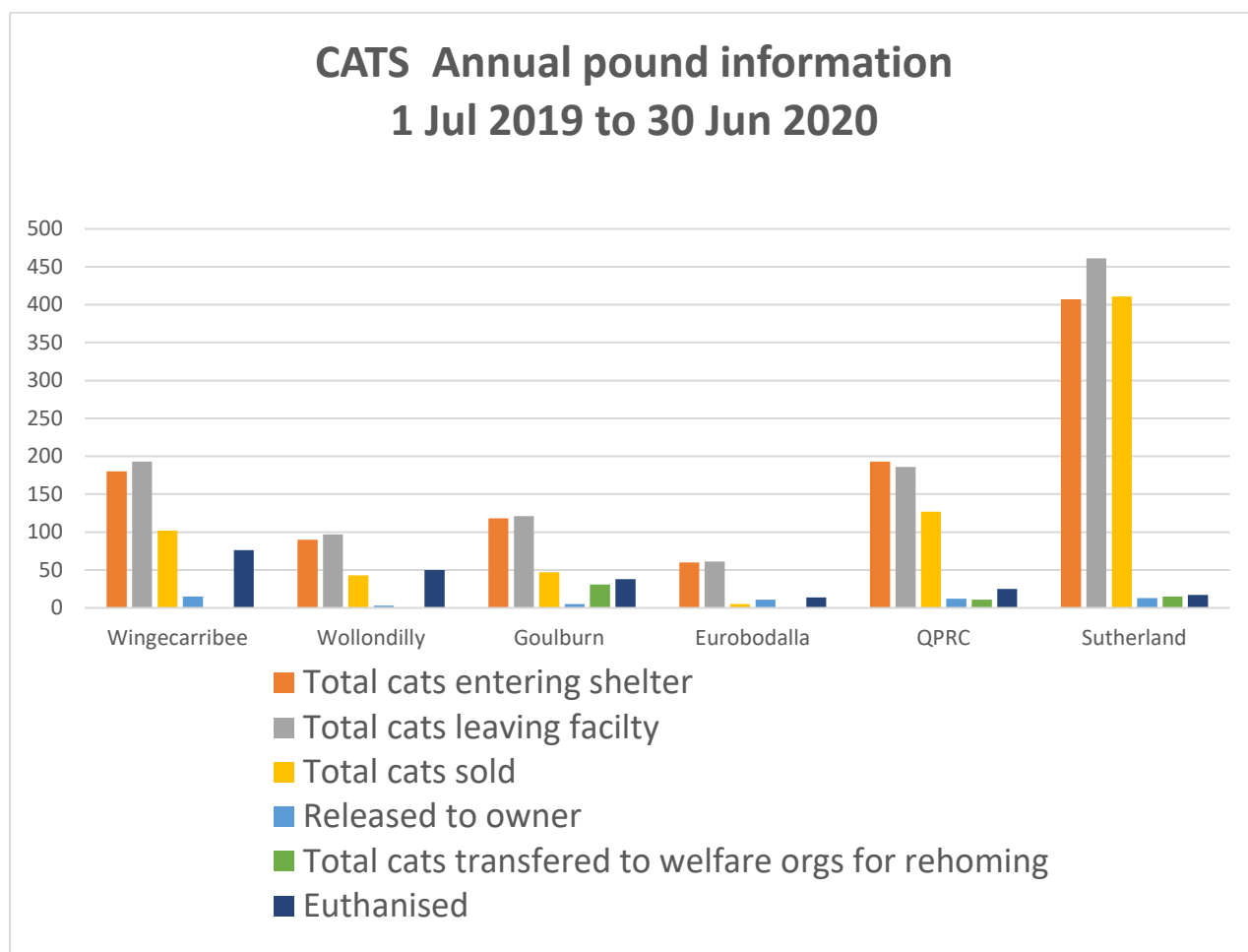
Wingecarribee Shire Council	50,493
Wollondilly Shire Council	52,230
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	30,852
Eurobodalla Shire Council	38,288
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council	59,959
Sutherland Shire Council	229,213

Table 1



Source: Office of Local Government – Comparative Information

Table 2



Source: Office of Local Government – Comparative Information

National Comparisons

Table 3

Stray Dog Statistics (Period 2014 – 2019)				
	All Council Areas Across All States	National Across All Agencies	NSW Councils' Average	WSC Average
% Reclaimed	52%	48%	43%	60%
% Re-homed	12%	31%	10%	24%
% Re-homed (of unclaimed)	26%	60%	18%	61%
% Live release	80%	79%	74%	86%
% Euthanised	20%	21%	26%	8%
% Eutahnised (of unclaimed)	43%	40%	46%	21%

Source – Therian: Wingecarribee Animal Care Solution, Animal Capacity & Program Study May 2020

Therian is a company with 30 years’ experience in the design and construction of projects in animal welfare. Their report is provided at Appendix A to this review. It brings together 5

years of data in relation to the operation of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter and applies this data to calculate the size and facility requirements for a new shelter to meet current demand.

Therian state in their report: *This table illustrates that historically WSC has been very successful in re-homing dogs compared to other councils and organisations across Australia.*

Financial Comparison to Similar / Adjoining Councils*

Table 4

	Wingecarribee SC	Goulburn M. SC	QPRC	Sutherland Shire** 2018 /2019
Staffing	\$251,232	\$287,348	TBC	\$238,827
Operations (incl Vet Costs)	\$157,588	\$276,981	TBC	\$270,937
Veterinary	\$34,169	\$21,251	Approx \$50,000	TBC

*Making meaningful comparisons of financial data is extremely difficult. The data above provides broad comparative data only. The figures provided for Wingecarribee and Goulburn Mulwaree Councils are preliminary actual expenditure figures for the 2020 / 2021 financial year.

**It should be noted that Sutherland Shire Council has been significantly impacted by COVID restrictions that have distorted operational budgets over the last two years. The Sutherland Shire Council figures in this table are drawn from the 2018/2019 financial year.

Adopted budget provision within WSC for the Animal Shelter has been restricted to 0.3% growth over the 5 year period 2015/2016 – 2020/2021 (\$479,569.90 in 15/16 - \$480,821 in 2020/2021). The cumulative rate peg set by IPART over the same period amounted to 10.7%.

The actual budget expended in the 2020 / 2021 financial period was \$408,851, a variation of \$71,970 from the adopted budget of \$480,821. Then major budget savings (ie in excess of \$20,00 by budget line item) were in the areas of:

- Salaries - \$64,564 (partially offset by the payment of unbudgeted overtime of \$21,967, ie overall saving in salary area of \$42,597)
- Contractor payments - \$26,737 (budget provision \$94,741)
- Building maintenance and repair - \$20,683 (budget provision \$31,062)

The adopted 2020 / 2021 income budget was delivered broadly in line with expectations – Actual income received being \$54,067 (budget provision was \$51,443)

Goulburn Mulwaree Council, with a population 20,000 less than WSC, had a substantially larger budget provision for the operations of their Animal Shelter, notwithstanding the fact that the shelter dealt with substantially more dogs than WSC.

Queanbeyan Palerang Shire Council has not yet provided broad costings for the operation of their shelter but has indicated that veterinary costs are substantially higher than WSC and are in the region of \$50,000 - \$60,000 a year.

6. Animal Shelter - Location

The image below shows the location of the Animal Shelter (the shaded area at the top of the image) and the site at Bowman Road that has been purchased for the proposed new facility (the shaded area bottom right of the image).

Image 1



The public entry to the Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) and the public access to the Animal Shelter is located at the bottom centre of the image, over the weighbridge. Visitors to the Animal shelter must then traverse the Resource centre site to gain access to the Shelter. The aerated dam can be seen at the top left of the image. The car park used by volunteers is just visible at the top of the image adjoining the shaded area. The new demountable office building is located at the top left hand corner of the shaded area in the existing site. The overall area of existing site measures 4,310sqm.

The individual facilities within the site and their measurements are as follows:

- Dog Kennels 332sqm
- Cat Quarantine 10sqm
- Cattery 40sqm
- Old Office 27sqm
- Shipping containers (storage) 60sqm
- New office (not yet occupied) 55sqm
- Total enclosed area (including new office) 524sqm
- The gross area of the entire site is 4,310sqm

An enlarged view of the Animal Shelter site is provided below:

Image 2



The total gross area of the proposed new site in Bowman Road is approximately 6,000sqm. The total proposed gross facility area required for a new Animal Shelter outlined in a study undertaken by Therian (attached as Appendix A - Animal Capacity Study & Facility Needs Assessment - May 2020) is 588.8sqm.

In a report to Council on 26 June 2019, by the Deputy General Manager Corporate, Strategy and Development Services, it was stated that *Council's Animal Shelter facility requires significant maintenance upgrades beyond the scope of existing budget allocation. Identified capital upgrades include:*

- *New security fencing and access and egress locations to the facility (not progressed as at August 2021)*
- *Additional security camera infrastructure and lighting (partially progressed)*
- *New staff amenities, administration building and public toilets and washroom (demountable building on site but still not operational)*
- *New volunteer room / sheltered area (demountable building on site but still not operational)*
- *Capital replacement of the cattery buildings and fit out (completed)*
- *Replacement of the disease control area (not progressed as at August 2021)*

- *Improved pedestrian circulation and surface treatments* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *Capital replacement of storage sheds / containers* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *Modified dog pens to enable ease of access and cleaning and isolation of dangerous dogs (completed)*
- *Upgrading of internal cleaning equipment* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *Upgrade of the dog and cat food storage and preparation areas* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *Installation of new solar panels and energy efficient lighting pumps and electrical equipment* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *Extending number of kennels to assist with population growth* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *New companion animal exercise yards* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *Improved grounds presentation / landscaping* (not progressed as at August 2021)
- *Improvements to storm water management on the site and liquid trade waste disposal* (not progressed as at August 2021)

The above report clearly identified priority areas for maintenance and upgrade of the existing Shelter in 2019. In the two years since the above report was presented to Council, only 2 items have progressed to completion (see above).

Access by the public is through the RRC site and facility provision for the volunteers, who under legislation retain the same rights as Council employees, is at best basic. Currently there is no toilet, only a small outdoor sink with cold running water and their only shelter is a re-purposed bus shelter.

A new demountable building is now on site and this will provide improved facilities for staff and volunteers once an access ramp is completed. Volunteers have expressed some concerns (see notes in the Community Engagement Section at Appendix B) about this demountable building not complying with development requirements and the structural safety of its support piers and anchoring. Council has confirmed, however, that appropriate planning processes relating to placing the facility on the site have been followed and the facility has been certified to comply with appropriate standards by a qualified engineer. The facility now only requires the completion of an access ramp for it to be certified as ready for occupation. This should be a priority and would make a substantial difference to the work environment of employees and provided some essential services for volunteers in addition to providing ramped access to the office by the public.

Council at its meeting of 12 February 2020 considered a report on the *Capital Replacement of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter*. The conclusion to this report states:

CONCLUSION

The shelter provides an important piece of important community infrastructure that enables Council to comply with its obligations under the Companion Animals Act 1998. The shelter also provides a facility that enables high quality care of impounded companion animals and also enables and facilitates community participation in the care and welfare of animals that are seeking rehoming opportunities under Council's Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy.

The current shelter has served the broader community over the past 19 years, the shelter infrastructure is now requiring significant capital upgrades to accommodate both population growth, compliance with welfare standards and also to overcome significant land use conflict issues being experienced associated with its current location. As the current proximity to other industrial uses such as the RRC become increasingly problematic due to dust, noise, odour and other hazards such as fires, it has become apparent that significant injection of capital into the upgrade of the current facility is not feasible and instead an alternative site should be pursued that removes the current land use conflicts that are being experienced.

The pursuit of capital replacement of the existing facility will provide for new opportunities in compliance with welfare standards, further expansion opportunities as the Local Government Area experiences population growth, marketing opportunities and achievement

and resolved:

1. *THAT Council provide in-principle support for the Capital Replacement of the Animal Shelter facility.*
2. *THAT Council acknowledge the most recent and ongoing occupational health and safety risks at the Resource Recovery Centre.*
3. *THAT Council also acknowledge that conditions at the Animal Shelter have been compromised for some time and are posing increasing health and safety issues for staff, animals and volunteers.*
4. *THAT Council allocate \$50,000 to enable preliminary concept plans to be prepared and the location of appropriate land to be identified for the purpose of constructing a modern, fit for purpose and stand-alone animal shelter AND THAT this funding request be referred to the Finance Committee.*
5. *THAT a report be brought back to the second meeting of April 2020 along with identified funding sources for the relocation and construction of a new animal shelter.*
6. *THAT due to the lack of clarity the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and Cats in animal boarding establishments, Council also develop guidelines to protect animals from the impacts of extreme weather conditions.*

Council, at its meeting of 8 July 2020, in resolving to adopt the 2020/21 Operational Plan and Budget established a \$5.2m reserve to allow for project scoping and design to be completed before a formal estimate is provided to Council. The wording within the report states:

Establishment of Animal Shelter Reserve

It is recommended that Council establish an Animal Shelter Reserve as part of the 2020/21 Budget. It is recommended that Council establish this reserve using the proceeds from recent land sales. Through establishing a specific reserve for the new shelter, this will then allow for further project scoping and design to be completed before a formal estimate is presented to Council.

It is recommended that the reserve be established with an opening balance of \$5.2 million (subject to the satisfactory settlement of the land sales).

A scoping study was undertaken by Therian in May 2020 entitled *Wingecarribee Animal Care Solution, Animal Capacity & Program Study*. Preliminary plans utilising the dimensions from this study placing a facility on the Bowman Road site have been drafted.

Site Constraints

As outlined in the Council report of 12 February 2020, the Shelter's location on Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) site provides a number of challenges. The RRC site is subject to a licence issued the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to Wingecarribee Shire Council (link below):

<https://apps.epa.nsw.gov.au/prpoeoapp/ViewPOEOLicence.aspx?DOCID=63913&SYSUID=1&LICID=10300>

The site was previously utilised by James Hardie Industries and it is understood that asbestos on the site has been capped. As a result, strict restrictions are placed on disturbing this cap. This has made many of the proposed upgrades to the Animal Shelter site a challenge, for example the placement of the repurposed bus shelter on site, placement and securing of the new office building, replacing and repairing broken pathways and linking run off from the cleaning of the kennels to a sewer connection.

The RRC strictly limits, and controls materials being taken on to the site that are needed to undertake upgrade works to paths and buildings. It is reported that overcoming these controls is extremely onerous, if not impossible further limiting the capacity to upgrade the facility.

Further examples of the challenges the site presents include the frequent presence of obnoxious odours from the RRC, and spray from a nearby saleyards' dam (that is polluted with effluent from the saleyards) and its aeration system that blows across the site on windy days. There have been several fires in green waste dumps situated in close proximity to the shelter that have required evacuation of the centre's staff and animals and earth moving work undertaken in close proximity to the shelter with the only barrier to the work being hessian placed on a wire fence. The failure to maintain and repair the broken path that must be traversed by the volunteers raises WHS concerns when they take dogs large dogs for walk that need to be restrained.

The number of WHS concerns are significant and there is an urgent need for a suitably qualified expert to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the site to clearly document concerns and establish a corrective action program. A review of logged WHS incidents for the Animal Shelter over a 4-year period to 2020 demonstrates regular reporting of a full spectrum of incidents including near misses by staff. The majority of reports are notifications of injuries inflicted by the animals and their treatment. There is also a need to raise awareness of any underlying issues that may have contributed to incidents occurring (eg lack of maintenance to fences) that should also be logged and corrective actions implemented. There is no record within the WHS log of the fires in the green waste that caused the evacuation of the centre or any documented corrective actions to manage / eliminate the concern.

Providing an alternative access to the Animal Shelter, avoiding entry through the RRC, needs further investigation. The current perception is that the EPA licence on the site simply prevents any alternative entry being provided and hence no significant investigations into the

intent of restriction appears to have been made. The provision of an alternate entry would provide a better outcome for the RRC and the Animal Shelter subject to the Shelter site being effectively isolated by way of fencing. Such a solution would significantly improve public access to the facility and should be pursued further.

Looking to the Future

Under the Impounding Act 1993, Part 4, Section 28, impounding authorities are required to establish and maintain pounds. Section 29 of the Act does enable an impounding authority to make use of a public pound established by another impounding authority if there are arrangements in place between the two authorities that authorise that use.

The nearest alternate shelter / pound facilities to Wingecarribee are located at Wollondilly, Shoalhaven and in the Illawarra, ranging in distance from between 60 – 100kms away. Practically, this limits the capacity of WSC to partner with another impounding authority to provide the service.

As a result, subject to the outcome of the above EPA Licence investigations and the viability of the ongoing use of the existing site, a decision needs to be made in the near future on the long-term plans for the facility provision.

Whilst Council has expressed in-principle support for the Capital Replacement of the Animal Shelter facility two options still remain:

- Upgrade the current facility – having regard for the considerable challenges presented by the site, and subject to the costs involved
- Construct a new centre on the Bowman Road site and
 - Retain ownership and management of the facility
 - Lease to an outside provider – should this be the preferred option then it would be desirable to engage the preferred group in the design of the new facility

Reports to Council between 2013 and 2019 do indicate community support for Council to retain management of the facility. Council undertook a trial a joint management approach in 2014 but reinstated Council management due to strong community support in 2015. This support was also evident in the engagement undertaken for this review.

The perceived neglect of the current shelter by Council is causing a level of anxiety in the volunteer groups that the new Shelter may not proceed and /or that its management may be outsourced. Regardless of the preferred outcome, there is a need to provide some certainty to the local community in regard to the Shelter's future as soon as practicable.

Even when / if a final decision is made to proceed with constructing a new facility then it is still likely that the existing Shelter will need to remain operational for 1 – 2 years and there will still be a need to conduct basic upgrades to ensure it continues to provide a work place that is compliant with relevant standards.

Recommendations

1. Engage an expert in WHS to undertake a thorough audit of the Animal Shelter site and buildings and develop a proactive action plan to implement needed upgrades as a matter of urgency
2. Continue to promote and encourage the reporting of WHS concerns at the shelter and its environs and ensure consideration of the underlying cause of the incident and the corrective action needed to remedy it, not simply a description of the event and the treatment of the injury
3. Senior staff should liaise with the government body responsible for oversight of the EPA Licence on the site with a view to securing an alternative public access point to the Shelter

7. The Operational Model of Service Delivery

A variety of operational models of service delivery exist across NSW. In terms of the Councils mentioned in tables 1 & 2:

Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council retains management of their animal shelter. The shelter receives significantly more dogs (almost double) that of Wingecarribee each year. As a result, the veterinary costs are reported to be in the region of \$50,000 - \$60,000 per annum (also double that of Wingecarribee).

The centre operates under a 21-day holding model with 4 exit strategies: re-home; return to owner; transfer to other welfare organisation or euthanise. It can be seen from Table 1 that the euthanasia rate for dogs is significantly higher at Queanbeyan Palerang area than in Wingecarribee.

The facility does not place a heavy reliance on volunteers – ‘just a few dog walkers and one cat enrichment person’.

The shelter provides few additional services beyond statutory requirements but does implement a 7 day trial model assisting in the re-homing some dogs. If rehoming is not working out the animal can be returned in 7 days with all fees being refunded.

The shelter is based in an old facility with some plans to build a new one but with no funds currently allocated.

Sutherland Shire Council retains management of their facility and provides a service to Sydney City Council.

Although having a population four times the size of Wingecarribee, the facility receives slightly fewer dogs each year, but a much higher number cats. Staffing costs for this centre are broadly comparable with Wingecarribee and operational cost slightly higher (comparison of 2019 costs due to the impact of Covid on current operations).

Sutherland Shire has a very active and productive volunteer group who are engaged in a range of activities beyond dog walking, including involvement in some social media activities. The social media pages are the most visited pages of the Council and have been highly successful in increasing rates of rehoming and increasing the positive profile of the Shelter.

It is reported that the euthanasia rates are minimal and, almost exclusively, applied only to feral animals, animals that are sick or requiring extensive medical attention or have been classified as dangerous. It is reported that the shelter is very near to achieving a no kill model for healthy / non-feral animals.

Eurobodalla Shire Council provides a traditional pound system where animals are held in compliance with the statutory periods provided for in the Companion Animals Act (7/14 days) and are then euthanised.

Despite this policy being in place it is reported that the vast majority of animals are re-homed or returned to owners. In recent years a small number of dogs have been held beyond the

statutory periods which has now resulted in only sick, seriously injured, or dangerous dogs being subject to euthanasia.

Lake Macquarie Council has recently renegotiated a contract with an external service provider to manage their facility following the end of a contract with the RSPCA.

The RSPCA manages several Animal Shelters:

- Sydney (Yagoona)
- Illawarra (providing a holding facility for Shellharbour and Wollongong City Councils)
- Hunter (providing a holding facility for Cessnock, Maitland and Newcastle City Councils)
- Coffs Harbour (providing a holding facility for Coffs Harbour City Council)
- Central West (in Orange – the centre is currently closed due to Covid. Orange City Council also manages its own purpose built Pound)
- Blue Mountains (Katoomba – Providing a holding facility for Blue Mountains City Council)

Wingecarribee Shire Council resumed the responsibility of the operations of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter in 2013, following the withdrawal of its appointed contractor, the Lost Dogs Home. Following an interim 12-month trial period of in-house management Council considered three potential management models being:

- Model 1 - Internal or 'in house management' whereby Council would assume all responsibility for the management and the operations of the Animal Shelter Facility.
- Model 2 - Mixture of in-house and external management whereby the existing facility would be used as a holding facility and animals would be transported to an external provider for appropriate rehoming; and
- Model 3 - External management whereby the facility would be operated by a contractor similar to the Lost Dogs Home arrangement.

Council resolved on 10 September 2014 to adopt option 2, being a mixture of in house and external management of the facility and also resolved to place the proposed model on public exhibition inviting public submissions and community feedback.

At its meeting of 8 July 2015 Council considered a number of public submissions subsequent to adopting model 2 above. At that time, it was found that there was a significant level of community support for Model 1 above, that is, in-house management.

The community support for in-house management model was premised on the basis that the community *sought to have a shelter presence in the Southern Highlands to enable capacity building in volunteer networks, community pride and self-worth in the shelter facility and also to ensure that local dogs and cats remained in the Southern Highlands for rehoming purposes.* Council resolved to adopt the in-house management option following the review of submissions received.

At its meeting of 26 June 2019 Council further reviewed the Operational Model for the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter. This review found that the Model that had been in place since 2015 had been highly successful in terms of:

- *Increasing stakeholder participation including increasing volunteer base and increasing exercising and socialisation of the animals within the shelter environment;*
- *Promoting foster care arrangements and organisations as a means to providing care to animals with increased human socialisation rather than isolation in a shelter environment;*
- *Building capacity and strengthening relationships with breed specific rehoming organisations;*
- *Increasing community awareness of responsible rehoming and responsible companion animal management through a variety of new programs;*
- *Increasing an online presence for promotional marketing of the shelter and building networks to increase rehoming opportunities;*
- *Achieving rehoming rates that are far in excess of those achieved by other Local Government Areas throughout the state; and*
- *Upholding key commitments contained within the adopted 'Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy' position*

The animal shelter has become an important piece of community infrastructure that realises the potential of maximising rehoming opportunities, high standards of welfare and also providing important social connections through participation, engagement and also providing purpose.

Council at its meeting of 26 June 2019 resolved:

1. *THAT Council confirms that the management of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter will continue in-house on a permanent basis within the budget set as part of Council's annual Operational Plan.*
2. *THAT a letter of thanks be forwarded by the Mayor, Clr Gair thanking Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter and other volunteer groups associated with the Animal Shelter for their invaluable assistance and work at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter.*

Since that time the facility has continued to operate under the in-house management model and has achieved comparable outcomes to surrounding Council operated shelters in terms of rehoming and achieving minimal rates of euthanasia. In a study commissioned by Council in 2020 (Therian: Wingecarribee Animal Care Solution, Animal Capacity & Program Study May 2020) stated:

....historically WSC has been very successful in re-homing dogs compared to other councils and organisations across Australia (see Table 3 above)

Three reviews of the operation of the Shelter have been undertaken in the last 8 years. The last 2 reviews considered public opinion and strong submissions in support of in-house management and the minimal euthanasia policy. It is considered unlikely that the public support for the in-house management model would have changed since 2019.

A move away from in-house management model would impact on the volunteers who have had a long and productive association with the shelter. Beyond the welfare benefit to the animals, volunteering also achieves the important outcomes of building resilience, community capacity and productive engagement with the local community – desirable outcomes highlighted in the Wingecarribee Community Strategic Plan 2031 and the NSW Volunteering Strategy 2020 – 2030.

Based on the above history, the strong interest from local volunteers and the support from the local community in terms of financial and other donations outlined in the following section this review, the retention of in-house management is likely to be the model preferred by the local community.

Operational and Veterinary Costs

It has been difficult to secure a range of financial data in the time available to undertake this review due to the differing ways in which Councils record these costs and the preparedness of some Councils to share this data.

In the limited number of cases where it has been possible to source this data (see Section 5 Table 4 – Comparative Information) to date the WSC Animal Shelter is comparable with the costs of operations incurred in other Council areas processing a similar number of animals. Similarly, with vet fees WSC is comparable or even below the fees incurred by other Councils.

Note: Approaches by different management models to the use of euthanasia is discussed in Section 9 – Euthanasia Policy of this review.

Recommendation

4. Having regard for the current challenges provided by the Shelter's co location with the Resource Recovery Centre, provide greater certainty to the community about the long-term the future of the Animal Shelter and its preferred management model as soon as practicable

8. Community Engagement

The specifications for this project required that the review include staff and stakeholder engagement.

A meeting with representatives of the Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (FOWAS) together with the Council (dog walkers and cat cuddlers) volunteer groups and the staff responsible for management of the Animal Shelter was held on 15 July 2021. In addition, email correspondence from a number of volunteers has been received. The second half of the meeting of 15 July specifically focussed on the confidential FOWAS memorandum of understanding and only involved the FOWAS representatives and council staff.

Greater detail of issues raised in the engagement process and in subsequent representations made by email are attached at Appendix B of this review.

The matters considered can be summarised in 5 theme areas:

1. Vision

The public profile of the shelter, both physically and its web site presence does not present a strong or inspiring vision for what the facility offers to the community, volunteers or staff and ultimately the animals.

2. Site Concerns

There are a number of serious concerns in relation to the location of the Animal Shelter that potentially make the long term occupation of this site unsustainable. These concerns have been well known and reported to Council in recent years and are reflected in the issues raised by staff and volunteers alike. Capped asbestos on the site appears to limit the capacity for the facility to be upgraded to meet contemporary standards. The Shelter's location in proximity to the Saleyards and co-location on the Resource Recovery Centre site frequently results in persistent obnoxious odours, prevailing winds cause spray that is potentially polluted with effluent to blow across the facility from the nearby dam which needs to be aerated, and the overland flow of polluted water from the washing down of the kennels further adds to concerns. There is an urgent need for a full assessment of the site to be undertaken by a qualified WHS professional.

3. Facilities

Some basic facilities are not provided. These include toilets for the volunteers and public, appropriately sized hand washing facilities (essential), a shower (desirable) for the volunteers, and disability access and parking. Some of these issues may be addressed once the new demountable building is occupied and functional.

4. Maintenance

A range of factors have contributed to the facility becoming tired and in need of significant maintenance. The look of the facility is generally one of neglect which does not inspire a positive working environment for the staff or volunteers. Several WHS issues need to be assessed and strategies put in place to address them. Overall, many of the volunteers have the pervading perception that Council does not care.

5. Volunteer Engagement & Management

A thriving group of volunteers have supported the shelter for almost 20 years. The volunteers fall under two groups:

- FOWAS – mainly involved in promotion, collecting donations of food and other items, fundraising and assisting in rehoming of dogs through a linked site to Council's Animals Available for Adoption
- Dog walkers and Cat Cuddlers

Within the meeting and subsequent submissions made to this review many volunteers have expressed a significant degree of disillusionment with Council. There is a real feeling that their endeavours are not valued, Council is not responsive to requests even where serious WHS issues are concerned, they are not supported and communication from Council is poor, non-existent or dismissive. These views have been reinforced in numerous lengthy written submissions providing a range of specific concerns in email correspondence.

Despite this, the contribution that volunteers make continues to be significant both in terms of hours devoted to the welfare of the animals and in fund raising for additional services that assist in improving the welfare of animals and in endeavours to re-home the animals.

It is evident that there are some differences of opinion between members of the differing volunteer groups that is resulting in some concerns. Some poor communication from Council has contributed to the concerns expressed by both groups. The overall presentation of the facility and the lack of response to some basic issues has caused frustration leading volunteers to voice concerns on social media.

There is a diversity of views in relation to volunteer involvement with Animal Shelters. Some shelters do not utilise volunteers at all considering the WHS risks are too great within the Animal Shelter environment. Other councils strictly limit numbers to very specific tasks in order to control the WHS risks. Several Councils have reported challenges in working with volunteers who may have strong opinions in relation to the welfare of animals which can at times be difficult to reconcile within the Council Shelter environment. Such views can be expected, their passion for the welfare of the animals is the reason why volunteers are volunteering. Sutherland Shire has also reported similar issues in the past, but has put in place mechanisms to ensure effective communication is provided to volunteers, systems to acknowledge and celebrate their achievements and sought to engage them in applying new technology to positively show the work of volunteers with the animals. This is reported to be having great success in achieving outstanding rehoming rates.

New technology can also improve communication in terms of providing feedback, even in real time, to staff, volunteers and the general community. Animal Shelters do provide an opportunity to present meaningful easily available data on Council's (and linked) web sites and at enquiry counters. Digital information on animals in, animals out, animals returned home, animals adopted is all data that is already compiled and required for statutory reporting purposes and together with a range of other information (volunteer hours worked and volunteer miles walked for example) can provide compelling information on the performance of the facility and promote to the public the outstanding contribution that volunteers make in the community.

The technology to display this type data live each day is readily available, is an effective marketing tool and provides incentive to ensure the data is accurately recorded. This 'dashboard' style of reporting is increasingly common across business operations.

Greater engagement with, actively listening to volunteers, valuing their work and celebrating their achievements within the team environment is also critical to ensuring the entire team remains motivated and working constructively together.

Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (FOWAS) - Memorandum of Understanding

FOWAS - History

The Friends of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (FOWAS) was started in 2006 in response to the need to advocate for abandoned and surrendered dogs and cats in the local Wingecarribee Shire area. (FOWAS) is an incorporated Not for Profit Charity.

FOWAS raises funds in a variety of ways to assist Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (WAS) in strategies for the successful rehoming of animals at the Shelter. The organisation has a large, registered base of members. The volunteers assist with fundraising events, including stalls at local monthly markets and the annual Retford Park Bowral 'A Dog's Day Out'; the pickup and delivery of pet food donations and the monthly delivery and collection of the (FOWAS) coin donation tins.

(FOWAS) has coin donation tins with local retailers across the Shire. The donation tins provide an opportunity for locals and visitors alike to support the Shelter through coin donations at retail stores in the Southern Highlands and see the latest news from the Shelter with a monthly poster. FOWAS also has an online shop selling FOWAS branded products.

Monies raised through fundraising events, donations and the monthly collection of coin donation tins are used in the ongoing support of animals at the Shelter. FOWAS receives pet food donations via local supermarket 'drop zones', local butchers and Bowral Harris Farm store. The local community and retailers provide these donations, and the food is used for the animals housed at the Shelter. It is understood that some non-financial donations may be offered for sale by FOWAS at various fairs and events.

FOWAS funds the employment of a professional dog trainer/behaviourist to assess and work with dogs at the Animal Shelter by enhancing good behaviour, manners and confidence before they transition into their new homes. The training and enrichment development goes a long way in improving the chances of dogs being rehomed.

Through fundraising, (FOWAS) can direct funds to the additional needs that may arise for animals at the Shelter, including the purchase of speciality food and elective surgery that may be required to improve the quality of life for the animals whilst in care and to better their chances of rehoming. Any excess funds remaining are transferred to a reserve to be targeted at the construction of a new Shelter.

FOWAS states that it is committed to work with a primary focus on continued fundraising in conjunction with Wingecarribee Shire Council to assist with building a new Animal Shelter in the Shire.

FOWAS is an independent, incorporated not for profit organisation and registered charity. They are compliant with all the reporting requirements of the NSW Department of Fair Trading and publish an annual report containing an audited financial statement each year.

FOWAS has a well-recognised brand in the Wingecarribee Shire with monthly posters of animals available for adoption displayed in retail premises together with cash donation tins in supermarkets and local shops. In the 15 months to June 2020 the organisation raised almost \$40,000 in donations, memberships, fundraising activities and sponsorships. In addition to funds allocated for dog training, approximately \$8,500 of this revenue was expended on activities directly associated with the Animal Shelter, and \$9,800 on administration activities (insurances, accounting and audit and fees, postage, printing, web site etc). Approximately \$21,000 was also transferred to a reserve which now amounts to in excess of \$145,000 which is targeted at the construction of the new shelter.

Some concerns have been raised about the term ‘sponsorship’ being applied to Council’s support for FOWAS and vice versa. A banner on the perimeter fence of the Animal Shelter promoting FOWAS does suggest that Council is a sponsor of the organisation. In reality, no sponsorship agreement exists between either party. The only formal agreement in place between Council and FOWAS is the Memorandum of Understanding which does focus on Council’s statutory responsibilities and FOWAS providing additional support beyond Council’s responsibilities to enhance the wellbeing of animals.

The FOWAS web page is linked to Council’s own Animal Shelter Facebook page displaying photographs of animals available for adoption. The branding of Council’s Animal Shelter Facebook page is not strong, and it is Council staff that are profiled on the Home Page of FOWAS web site. Whilst this recognition is welcomed, it may lead to some confusion as to who is responsible for the overall operation of the Shelter.

FOWAS Mission Statement

“We work with Wingecarribee Animal shelter, community, business and Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC) to enhance the welfare, enrichment and rehoming of displaced animals until their adoption”.

FOWAS - Memorandum of Understanding

The last memorandum with FOWAS was signed on 08.02 2019 and expired on 08.02.2021.

The main points in the MOU are as follows:

Council

- Council has sole financial responsibility for the operation, management and capital maintenance of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (WAS)
- The Council is responsible for provision, operation and maintenance of an ‘approved premises’ in accordance with Companion Animals Act 1989 and Impounding Act 1991
- Council is responsible for providing for the basic welfare needs of the animals including suitable shelter, beds, feeding and watering facilities, security and a disease free environment in accordance with the NSW Dept of Primary Industries guidelines to ensure the welfare for operation of shelters

- Council will provide reasonable access to the public areas of the shelter by volunteers to deposit donations, re-stock, dispatch goods during business hours following check in with the administration officer
- In conjunction with the Team Leader Council will permit access to the Shelter during business hours to ensure welfare standards
- A range of procedures in relation to assets donated by FOWAS
 - Disposal of assets should operation cease
 - Creation of an asset register
 - Maintenance of donated goods
 - Disposal of donated goods at end of useful life
 - Naming rights on suitable donations
 - Provision of storage for donated goods

FOWAS

- FOWAS will indemnify Council against any claims relating to personal injury, property damage and nuisance and will provide copies of public liability insurance.
- FOWAS shall provide Council with support services and goods from time to time to provide additional levels of care to animals in the shelter in addition to the Council's primary care responsibilities
- FOWAS will contribute 50% of cost for veterinary treatment beyond Council's responsibilities where it can be demonstrated the service will assist in re-homing -- capped at \$5,000 for each party
- FOWAS can fund additional veterinary services, where agreed and in consultation with Council
- FOWAS and Council will promote each other in a positive manner in the Media and on social media

Grievances by either party should be lodged in writing.

Comment

The MOU has now expired and requires updating and re-signing. This is an opportunity to review all aspects of the MOU and simplify the document.

In terms of Council responsibilities outlined in the MOU, they align closely with Council's statutory responsibilities.

In line with clauses contained within 3.2 – 3.4 and 4.2 Council should retain responsibility for all cost costs associated with its ongoing statutory responsibilities. Notwithstanding this approach, food deposited in collection bins and donated by butchers should be used to supplement the basic dietary needs of the animals.

In line with the clauses contained within 4.1 it is considered that financial support from FOWAS should be used primarily for the purchase of 'additional' services and goods that enhance the capacity of animals to be rehomed and provide for an enhanced living experience, while they are resident in the shelter.

Grouping of FOWAS and Council responsibilities in the MOU separately would make the agreement clearer.

The clause relating to use of media and social media should be reviewed in order to place greater emphasis on both parties seeking to raise issues of concern and both parties providing a genuine commitment to seeking to reconcile differences prior to the use of these mediums. Once issues are raised in the public arena it can be very difficult to control narratives that can escalate unnecessarily and be damaging for all concerned and ultimately the animals.

The extent of non-cash donations received by FOWAS is considerable (high quality dog bowls, bedding and food). These goods are stored in the shipping containers located on the site. The MOU outlines a process whereby these goods are to be entered into Council's asset register when received and removed following their disposal or sale. This process is not currently being followed and this lack of oversight and control of sometimes valuable items does create temptation and opportunities for theft.

It is understood that bottle recycling and deposit claim is also undertaken on the site. It would be desirable to move this activity off-site to avoid any further conflicts with the EPA licence and procedures developed to record all transactions.

It is noted that the Business Support Officer's position in the Shelter is currently vacant. It would be this position that would largely be responsible for these tasks. Given the current vacancies in the team it would be an opportune time to review the unit's current staffing levels and develop a new structure better designed to meet its operational needs.

It is understood that some of the donated goods are removed from storage for sale at local shows and events through the year with proceeds being paid to FOWAS and held in the FOWAS bank account. There is a need to develop a process where the transfer of these goods from the store is noted and the amounts raised recorded enabling effective stock control and auditing of goods received into and leaving council ownership.

The Memorandum of Understanding has been a confidential document in the past. Within Local Government it is desirable to ensure that all agreements are transparent and open to public scrutiny. Section 10A of the Local Government Act, for example, outlines the limited situations where a council meeting may be closed to the public. This includes matters such as personnel matters, personal information, commercial in-confidence matters. There are no matters in the MOU that would appear to fall under these considerations and as such it is considered that, when a new MOU is signed, it should be available open and available for public scrutiny.

It is clear that there is a thriving volunteer base that actively wants to support the Animal Shelter in its operations, demonstrated through the time commitment of volunteers, the value of funds raised, and the volume of donated goods. These are all factors that provide a strong indication of the overall community commitment to supporting a locally based Animal Shelter and its volunteers. This is resource that is not present in all communities and one that should be treasured and celebrated.

Recommendations

5. Expedite the construction and installation of a ramp to provide access to the new demountable office building on the existing site and secure certification for occupation
6. In partnership with the volunteer groups, develop an affordable prioritised asset maintenance / renewal plan for the existing site with a view to implementing a strategic approach to the life of the asset, having regard to the decision made at recommendation 4 above
7. Adopt a refreshed Vision, Goal and Strategies for the Animal Shelter
8. Review and update Council's Volunteer Policy and Procedures (example attached at Appendix C)
9. Update and implement a new induction program for volunteers – seek existing volunteer input
10. Undertake a review of the Shelter's staffing complement with a view redesigning the structure to better meet the emerging needs of the unit and its business support requirements
11. Update the Shelter's web pages to reflect the updated Vision, Goal and Strategies
12. Provide opportunities for increased volunteer involvement with and on social media pages with the animals they care for, and ensure regular, twice weekly at a minimum, updating of social media pages so that they accurately reflect the current situation in relation to animals available for rehoming and adoption. Remove animals as soon as they are adopted.
13. Seek to recruit a team member from the Communities / Communications area of Council who can mentor staff at the shelter in volunteer engagement
14. Implement regular meetings that bring together both the volunteer groups to ensure clear and consistent messaging and active engagement
15. Seek to innovate the 'public view' of the shelter
 - a. Investigate the use of informative 'dashboards' on the web site and at the public desk
 - b. Network with other Shelters they investigate how they are using new technology to promote animals available for adoption
16. Ensure an asset register is created and that all donations are recorded as they enter and leave the site.
17. Introduce a procedure to record assets that are removed from stores on site and record proceeds from the sale of goods
18. Seek to move the recycling of bottles to an alternative off site location and introduce monitoring and recording of the funds raised through this avenue
19. Meet with FOWAS with a view to renewing the Memorandum of Understanding between FOWAS and Council:
 - a. Seek to simplify the MOU where possible
 - b. Council responsibilities should focus on statutory responsibilities
 - c. FOWAS responsibilities should focus on the provision of additional services beyond Council's statutory requirements
 - d. Review the clause on the use of social media to focus content on:
 - i. Positively promoting the partnership between Council and volunteers in the interest of the welfare of animals.

9. Euthanasia Policy

The Companion Animals Act 1998 states:

64 Unclaimed seized or surrendered animal may be sold or destroyed

- (1) If a seized animal (including an animal delivered to a council pound under section 63A) or a surrendered animal (other than an animal surrendered by its owner) has not been claimed, the council may sell or destroy the animal—
 - (a) if notice under section 63 (1) or (1A) has been given—after the period of 14 days following the giving of the notice, or
 - (b) if such a notice is not required to be given—after the animal has been held at the council pound for a period of 7 days.

64A Animals surrendered by owners may be sold or destroyed

- (2) Before destroying a surrendered animal as authorised by subsection (1), it is the duty of the council concerned to consider whether there is an alternative action to that of destroying the animal and (if practicable) to adopt any such alternative.

Section 64 of the Act allows Councils to sell or destroy an animal after 7 days if it is not microchipped, or 14 days if it is microchipped (after the owner being notified). However, Section 64A (2) does place a duty on Councils to examine alternatives to euthanasia.

There does not appear to be any consistent stated industry service standard or target relating to the extent of euthanasia practised in council shelters / pounds.

The Euthanasia Policy adopted by Wingecarribee Shire Council on 11 December 2019 (attached at Appendix E) addresses section 64A (2) of the Companion Animals Act 1998.

The draft Euthanasia Policy was placed on public exhibition via Council's Your Say Web Site in September 2019. The consultation report on the exhibition provided the following data:

- 170 Page views
- 69 Informed Visitors to the site (ie downloaded the document)
- 4 Engaged visitors (ie made submissions)

Whilst the number of formal submissions was small, all 4 supported the Policy's direction with 2 suggesting it could go even further. The draft Euthanasia Policy was the most viewed project on exhibition at that time, making up 48% of all visits to the Your Say site. No submissions were made raising any concerns with policy.

Tables 1 & 2 in Section 5 of this review (Comparative Information) provide data on the number of animals euthanised by adjoining councils of a similar size. Broadly, speaking the charts indicate that the number of dogs euthanised by WSC is comparable to, or lower than, surrounding Councils. The euthanasia rate of cats is slightly higher. It is reported that the increased number of cats euthanised in recent years may have been related to bushfires in the Shire reducing habitat for feral cats, forcing them into the more inhabited areas of the Shire to search for food.

The WSC Shelter staff work in partnership with other breed specific rescue organisations such as Greyhounds NSW to avoid the need for euthanasia and seek adoption and rehoming through these organisations and their networks.

In the 2019 / 20 period the Sutherland Shire Council (SSC) Animal Shelter received double the number of cats into the shelter but had a significantly lower euthanasia rate than WSC (75% less). The Facebook page of SSC's Animal Shelter is the Council's single most visited page and has been highly successful in assisting with rehoming animals and avoiding the need to consider euthanasia. Sutherland Shire is exploring new technology with volunteers involved in creating short video clips which are also proving extremely popular and successful in assisting with the rehoming of both cats and dogs. Sutherland Shire Council reports that euthanasia is now rare and is almost always related to dangerous / unmanageable, sick or seriously injured dogs or feral cats.

The Animal Shelter at Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) provides a 21-day holding model with 4 exit strategies: Return to owner, re-home, transfer to other welfare organisation or euthanise at the conclusion of this period. The euthanasia rate for dogs at QPRC is the highest for the comparison councils (Table 1 in section 5 - Comparative Information), however the rate for cats is consistent with other councils.

Eurobodalla has traditionally provided a 'Pound' model of service delivery, applying the statutory provisions relating to euthanasia contained within the Companion Animals Act (7 days for non-microchipped animals and 14 days for micro chipped animals). However, Eurobodalla reports that the vast majority of animals are returned to owners or re-homed, and that euthanasia is only required in the case of dangerous dogs and feral cats. Euthanasia rates for both cats and dogs in Eurobodalla compare favourably with any of the comparison councils.

At a meeting held on 15 July 2021 with the Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (FOWAS), volunteer dog walkers, cat cuddlers and Council staff all endorsed the aim and ongoing implementation of the existing Euthanasia Policy.

The Memorandum of Understanding between FOWAS provides for \$10,000 (\$5,000 Council and \$5,000 FOWAS) to be budgeted for additional veterinary services beyond that provided by Council to meet statutory obligations - where it can be demonstrated that those services are likely to increase the chance of re-homing. There are several examples of where these additional services have greatly assisted in re-homing outcomes within Wingecarribee. Sutherland Shire operates a similar system where donations are used to enable the provision of additional services and it is reported that this is common practice across many councils.

Councils overall have become very effective in rehoming dogs and, whilst the euthanasia rate for cats in WSC is somewhat higher than some other councils, it is understood that this may be due to the increased number of feral cats in urban areas due to bushfires. It is reported that the effective use of social media has been a highly significant factor in reducing the need to euthanise any but dangerous, sick or injured animals.

The process for decision making in relation to Euthanasia is guided by Euthanasia Policy, and guided by advice provided in Practice Note 5 which states:

6.5 Euthanasia

- 6.5.1 Euthanasia should be considered where an animal becomes seriously ill or injured during boarding and where it is recommended by a veterinarian who has examined the animal.
- 6.5.2 Permission from the animal's owner or nominee, preferably in writing, should be obtained.
- 6.5.3 Euthanasia should only be performed by a veterinarian.

The decision to euthanise an animal within the Shelter is currently made by the Team Leader in consultation with a veterinarian and can only be carried out by a veterinarian. The shelter is highly successful in returning dogs to their owners or securing rehoming options for almost all dogs (except if they are dangerous, ill or injured) and the majority of non-feral cats. It has been reported, however, that in a small number of instances animals may be held for substantial periods of time. It is considered that the decision on euthanasia in such instances should be escalated to the Co-ordinator – Regulatory Services and that a guideline be implemented as to the timeline as to when consideration of this decision is made. In reality this a decision that will only be made in a small number of instances and/or in exceptional circumstances.

Best practice Councils (eg Sutherland Shire) would suggest that increased vigilance in the updating of the web site and the application of techniques utilising new technology could almost eliminate the need for this decision to be made .

Recommendation

20. That the current Euthanasia Policy be endorsed, and its ongoing implementation supported subject to the inclusion of the following clause:

The decision to euthanise an animal that is unable to be rehomed within a reasonable time frame be escalated to the Coordinator – Regulatory Services in consultation with a veterinarian

21. Develop a clear and reasonable time frame for establishing when consideration of euthanasia will occur for animals that are unable to be re-homed, adopted or transferred to partner animal welfare groups

10. Staff Delegations and Decision Making

No staff within the Animal Shelter have, to date, been provided with delegations under the Impounding Act 1993 or Companion Animals Act 1998. Staff within the Shelter make decisions relating to these Acts on a daily basis. These Acts should be added to delegations of Shelter staff as a matter of urgency.

It is reported that shelter staff regularly come under intense and emotional pressure from owners to waive fees. Legislation does not provide an avenue for the waiving of fees and it is important that staff be reminded of these responsibilities. Surrendering an animal can be highly emotional and there will be instances where non-payment of a fee is unavoidable. ShelterBuddy® does allow for a zero fee to be entered in its financial system when an animal is surrendered, but there is no mechanism that would highlight this anomaly to the Coordinator of Regulatory Services except through an onerous audit process. Shelter staff can also come under pressure from angry and emotional people. WHS records show there has been a need to report such incidents to the police. Staff are frequently on their own and should be trained in skills to deal with difficult people. There is a need to undertake a review of the Shelter's staffing complement with a view redesigning the structure to better meet the emerging needs of the unit and its business support requirements

The Coordinator Regulatory Services has delegated authority to approve purchases to the value of \$10,000 in line with Council's procurement policy. The Team Leader – Wingecarribee Animal Shelter has delegated authority to approve purchases to the value of \$1,000 in line with Council's procurement policy. These delegations are considered appropriate. It is noted that that the expenditure budget for the 2020/2021 period was underspent by approximately \$70,000 in total. A maintenance budget of \$30,000 was underspent by \$20,000 despite maintenance being raised as a major concern by the volunteers.

Neither the Coordinator Regulatory Services or the Team Leader of the Animal Shelter have traditionally been provided with any information relating to the content of budgets for which they have responsibility, its total amount, or the value of individual line items. Access to the TechOne financial system has now been provided for 2021/2022 financial year. As a result, purchases in the past have largely been reactive in nature, with authorisations made to replace broken items, those at the end of their useful life, attend to urgent maintenance matters and replace uniforms, protective clothing or pay bills. These two key staff, with hands on knowledge of the Shelter's operations, were neither consulted on budget preparation or advised of its content subsequent to adoption.

With no knowledge of the value of the overall budget and line items, the Shelter's team members have had no idea if budgets were on target or even being overspent. Little or no prioritisation of upgrades or a strategic approach to scheduled maintenance over the life of the asset has occurred.

Recommendation

22. Staff working in the Animal Shelter should be provided with delegations under the Impounding Act 1993 or Companion Animals Act 1998 as a matter of urgency
23. Training in dealing with difficult people should be added to the training calendars of Shelter staff at the time of annual performance reviews

11. ShelterBuddy®

ShelterBuddy® Software was developed by the RSPCA Queensland. It is cloud based software that was designed specifically for animal shelters providing a centralised animal record system. It is considered a 'rogue' system that was not implemented nor is it supported by the WSC IT Area. The system has a focus is on shelter operations, animals and their care. It has no links to Council's broader IT infrastructure or Council's TechOne financial systems.

The Team Leader at the Shelter is the key person who enters data on to the ShelterBuddy® system. Financial transactions from the shelter are manually journaled to Council's financial system TechOne. The Shelter is not provided with any significant business support, relying on the skills of staff to enter data and maintain Council's web and Facebook page. Staff who work in the Animal Shelter were primarily recruited for their skills and compassion in working with animals rather than IT or social media skills.

More technical information on ShelterBuddy® can be found at the site below:
<http://www.shelterbuddy.com/index.html#about>

The ShelterBuddy® web site does state that their system is widely used by Councils in Australia. It appears, however, that there is no single preferred information management system that is utilised by Council administered Animal Shelters. Sutherland Shire Council (SSC) has developed their own system which does link to the TechOne. It is understood that SSC has provided access to this system free of charge to another Council, under the condition that SSC will not provide any ongoing support for it. The Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council reports that they make use of the core Electronic Content Management System (ECM) which is linked to the TechOne Financial system. TechOne does provide an 'Animal' add on for its system, however, its focus is on linking animals to properties for the purpose of licensing and payments, not managing the day-to-day functions of the shelter.

Some concerns have been reported in recording or failing to record various transactions, and the logging of animals received in to and exiting the Shelter. Creating an increased pool of staff with knowledge of the ShelterBuddy® software system would also provide for more oversight of system and capacity to correct errors and support staff at times when they may be under some pressure to waive fees.

It would be highly desirable for a process mapping project to be undertaken that details work practices in the Shelter so that appropriate software applications are sourced and scoped to best fit the business needs of the Shelter and its integration with the broader council electronic content and financial management systems. It would be desirable for an increased level of business support to be provided to the team. This should reduce any errors, provide greater support when staff may be under pressure to waive fees and generally provide a greater level of oversight reducing the potential for fraud in what is an isolated site. An increased level of IT skills in the team could also enhance opportunities for greater creativity in the use of emerging social media applications and their use in assisting with the re-homing of animals.

Recommendations

24. Undertake a Process Mapping project to define work activities and better specify the IT needs of the Unit in order to source or develop an IT solution that better meets the needs of the Animal Shelter and its effective integration with broader Council systems

Report for Wingecarribee Shire Council

Animal Capacity & Program Study

INNOVATION SOLUTIONS
CONSULTATION PLANNING PERMITS
SPACE PLANNING WASTE MANAGEMENT
CONCEPT BUSINESS MAPPING DESIGN SERVICES
SITE ASSESSMENT RECEPTION **DESIGN**
AUTHORITY APPROVALS **MORE THAN BEFORE**
CONSTRUCT
REFURBISHMENT
SURGICAL EQUIPMENT PROJECT MANAGEMENT
PRODUCT EXPANSION SITE MANAGEMENT
ANIMAL HOUSING CABINETS TOWN PLANNING
FITOUT CAGING CABINETS BUILDER SELECTION
TENDERING



28 May 2020



Animal Capacity Study & Facility Needs Assessment

28 May 2020

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1.0 Executive Summary

Review and analysis of the historical companion animal intake and outcome statistics for Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC) was conducted to estimate specific animal housing requirements for a new animal shelter. A total of five full years and one partial year of data were provided by WSC and for the purpose of this study, only the five full years were evaluated, covering years 2014/2015 through year 2018/2019 (the study period). Over this period, the average shelter intake for dogs has been 417 dogs and 240 cats per year. This total intake includes both owner-surrendered animals and intake of stray or other homeless animals.

Animals that enter the shelter are either returned to their owners, re-homed, or transferred to rescue groups for re-homing, with only animals identified as unhealthy or dangerous that are euthanised. Over the study period, WSC has operated with a live-release rate of 86% for dogs/puppies, and 65% for cats. This live-release rate compares favourably to national and state averages and no substantial change would be expected in the near future.

Required animal capacity for the animal shelter can be calculated based on the historical animal statistics, with an allowance for additional peak capacity, and consideration of future population growth. For peak demand, an allowance of 1.2x calculated capacity for dogs and 2x capacity for cats has been used. No additional allowance for population growth has been included. Using the data provided and these assumptions for peak demand, the total required animal holding capacity for the new shelter has been estimated as 19 dogs and 46 cats.

The spatial requirements for housing the calculated number of animals and the necessary support spaces has been tabulated and would suggest a total facility size equal to approximately 589 m² is needed.

2.0 Review of Historical Animal Intake and Outcome Statistics

A summary of the Animal Intake and Outcome is included as Table A at the end of this report.

An average from the previous five full year statistics were used for analysis of the required capacity although there has been some downward trend, particularly with regard to the number of dogs taken into the shelter.

There were two unexplained anomalies in the reported data that have not been accounted for during the 2016/2017 reporting year. For dogs in this period, there was a reported intake of 538 dogs, with outcomes provided for only 419 dogs. Conversely in the same year for cats, there was a reported intake of 187 cats, however outcomes were provided for 294 cats. In the absence of any adjustments to these statistics, they have been factored into the average intake and outcomes as reported by WSC.

The average intake into the council shelter during the 5 year period is 417 dogs per year, and 240 cats. The live release rate is calculated at 86% for dogs and 65% for cats. The

reported outcome statistics for dogs were compared to available data for comparison purposes and are as follows:

Stray Dog Statistics				
	All Councils across All States	National across All Agencies	NSW Councils Avg.	WSC Average
% Reclaimed	52%	48%	43%	60%
% Re-homed	12%	31%	10%	24%
% Re-homed (of unclaimed)	26%	60%	18%	61%
% Live Release	80%	79%	74%	86%
% Euthanised	20%	21%	26%	8%
% Euthanised (of unclaimed)	43%	40%	46%	21%

This comparison illustrates that WSC has historically been very successful in re-homing stray dogs and minimising euthanasia compared to other councils and organisations across Australia and throughout New South Wales. Although similar detailed statistics for cats are not readily available, the 65% live release rate for cats is likely higher than that achieved by most comparable Councils. Additional research would be necessary to establish benchmarks for cats.

3.0 Length-of-Stay

While historical length-of-stay statistics have not been reported by WSC, for a council shelter facility the LOS is going to be influenced by a number of factors. For impounded animals, the legislative requirements for mandatory hold periods and the owner-reclaim rates dictate the average hold for animals in statutory hold. While the mandatory hold periods are set at 7 days and 14 days for non-microchipped vs microchipped animals respectively, owner reclaim rates can vary and be influenced by a number of factors such as general community demographic profile, public awareness programs, and local policies. Higher owner-reclaim rates will tend to decrease the average LOS as reclaims are likely to occur in the first 48-72 hours after an animal is impounded. While the statutory hold for microchipped animals at 14 days vs 7 days for non-microchipped animals could suggest that high compliance with microchipping could increase average LOS in a shelter, the opposite is true since higher microchipping compliance increases the likelihood of owner-reclaims, which in turn has a much greater effect of lowering the average LOS.

For estimating purposes, it is suggested that an average LOS for both dogs and cats equal to 8 days for impounded animals may be used. This is usually achievable and allows for the minimum hold for non-microchipped animals, plus an additional day for the initial intake or time for organising transfer to a rehoming or other outside organisation at the end of the hold. Due to the higher reclaim rates for microchipped animals, it would not be expected that the longer 14 day hold for microchipped animals would cause the LOS to increase beyond the minimum hold period for non-microchipped animals (7 days).

For shelters with direct-to-public re-homing, longer hold times are to be expected for those animals that are not re-claimed by their owners and are made available for sale to the

public. It is understood that WSC maintains as policy or operational goal to limit euthanasia to only unhealthy or dangerous animals that are deemed unadoptable. Historical outcomes are reflective of this policy and can be used to estimate average LOS for animals that are adopted out of the shelter.

An average rate of adoption is first calculated by the number of animals adopted per year divided by 365 days per year, resulting in a rate expressed in average number of animals adopted per day. By multiplying the number of animals adopted per day by the average total number of adoptions per year, a total number of days to adoption is the result. The LOS in the impound is then subtracted from the total LOS for adopted animals to provide the average LOS specific to the adoption/rehoming holding area capacity. Applying these calculations to the data provided by WSC, the average historical time to adoption for dogs is 21 days, and the average historical time to adoption for cats is 46 days.

4.0 Shelter Capacity Calculations

The minimum required holding capacity for the shelter or any specific holding area can be calculated by dividing the annual number of relevant animals by 365 days per year to arrive at the number of animals per day entering the shelter or specific area, then multiplying by the average length-of-stay for that specific area. The calculation is expressed as follows:

$$(AI / 365) * LOS = Req\#$$

where:

- AI = Average Annual Intake
- LOS = Length-of-Stay
- Req# = Required number of pens or cages needed

The average annual intake for dogs and cats over the most recent 5 year period was calculated and used as the baseline for estimating the required shelter-wide animal holding capacity, with LOS set to a target LOS equal to 14 days for dogs and 30 days for cats based on a weighted average for both the impound hold period (8 days), and adoption hold periods (avg. 21 days for dogs, 46 days for cats).

Overall Shelter Capacity, including Impound/Quarantine and Re-homing Areas

The calculated Minimum Animal Capacity Calculations are shown in the attached Table B. The total minimum animal holding capacity for all areas of the shelter are:

- Dogs: 16 pens
- Cats: 20 pens (cages)

For the purpose of this study, we have used a Design Animal Capacity equal to 1.2 times the calculated Minimum Animal Capacity for dogs, and 2 times the calculated Minimum Animal Capacity for cats. Council should consider whether these allowances are sufficient to deal with any peak demand for capacity due to seasonal fluctuations or emergency boarding situations although it may not be practical to build capacity for every possible eventuality.

Future growth has not been factored into the demand capacity calculations. Future population growth may not result in a directly linear corresponding demand for shelter facilities due to changes in policy, public education, or evolving changes in animal ownership that are likely to offset potential increased demand purely based on population growth. Applying the multiplication of 1.2x for dogs, and 2x for cats to allow only for some level of peak demand provides the following as the “Design Animal Capacities”:

- Dogs: 19 pens total
- Cats: 40 pens total

Impound/Quarantine Area Holding Capacity

Using an average LOS for the impound area equal to 8 days for both dogs and cats as described above, the minimum calculated capacity for this area of the shelter is:

- Dogs: 8 pens
- Cats: 5 pens (cages)

Applying the peak design factor of 1.2x for dogs and 2x for cats, this would result in a Design Animal Capacities of:

- Dogs: 10 pens
- Cats: 10 pens

Re-homing Area Holding Capacity

Using the average LOS for adoption-only holding equal to 21 days for dogs and 46 day for cats, the minimum calculated capacity for the re-homing holding area is:

- Dogs: 6 pens
- Cats: 18 pens

Applying the peak design factor of 1.2x for dogs and 2x for cats, this would result in a Design Animal Capacities of:

- Dogs: 7 pens
- Cats: 36 pens

Recommended Design Capacity

From the calculations above, design capacity can be fixed based on either the overall average intake and LOS for the shelter as a whole, or can be established based on the sum of the individual demand for the impounding and adoption areas. A conservative assumption would allow for capacity based on the greater of either way of calculating capacity. The recommended Design Capacity therefore is:

- Dogs: 19 pens (from Overall Shelter Capacity)
- Cats: 46 pens (sum of Impound Area Capacity and Re-homing Area Capacity)

5.0 Project Brief

The intent of the project brief is to establish the necessary functional areas and assess the required building area to accommodate the functional needs to suit the operational requirements and necessary capacity.

Refer to the attached Table C “Wingecarribee Council Shelter Building Program” for a detailed listing of the proposed functional areas and the spatial requirements of each. Based on this study, the minimum total estimated building required to meet the needs of Council is 589 m².

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

When considering both the calculated animal capacity based on historical data, and the functional space requirements for the operations, it is believed that the Council impounding and re-homing operations could be achieved in a total facility area equal 589 m².

The facility needs assessment is based on the operational requirements for impounding and re-homing dogs and cats only and has not considered any significant changes in policy or services to be provided by Council. Additional assessment should be undertaken if Council intends to vary from their current operating model.

7.0 Appendix

7.1 Table A

Wingecarribee Shire Council Summary of Most Recent 6 Years' Historical Data															
	Dogs														5-yr Avg. Combined Dogs & Puppies
	2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019		2019-2020 (part)		Average		
	Dogs	Puppies	Dogs	Puppies	Dogs	Puppies	Dogs	Puppies	Dogs	Puppies	Dogs	Puppies	Dogs	Puppies	
INTAKES															
Owner Surrender	62	-	61	-	64	0	57	9	49	4	17	1	53	7	61
Returns from Adoption	0	-	0	-	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Stray Intake	373	-	398	-	474	0	285	23	214	8	110	6	318	16	355
Transfers In	-	-	-	-	0	0	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Intake	435	-	459	-	538	0	344	32	264	12	127	7	304	22	
Owner Requested Euthanasia	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Adjusted Total Intake	435	0	459	0	538	0	344	32	264	12	127	7	408	22	417
	435		459		538		376		276		134		417		
OUTCOMES															
Return to Owner	284	-	322	-	254	0	221	3	159	3	82	4	190	3	249
Adoptions	113	-	101	-	126	0	87	14	58	11	26	2	90	13	102
Transfers to Rescue	1	-	5	-	3	0	4	4	10	0	8	1	7	2	
Subtotal - Live Release	398	-	428	-	383	0	312	21	227	14	116	7	350	18	357
Euthanised (Dangerous or Unhealthy)	41	-	27	-	35	0	33	0	40	1	13	0	37	1	
Euthanised (unable to re-home)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Subtotal - Euthanised	41	-	27	-	35	0	33	0	40	1	13	0	37	0	35
Died or Lost in Council Care	5	-	3	-	1	0	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Outcomes	444	0	458	0	419	0	345	21	270	14	129	7	379	18	394
	444		458		419		366		284		136		394		394
SUMMARY															
Live Release Rate	91%	-	93%	-	71%	-	91%	66%	86%	117%	91%	100%	86%		86%
Calculated Population Change	-9	0	1	0	119	0	-1	11	-6	-2	-2	0	23		
Average Monthly Intake	35														
Peak Monthly Intake	Unknown														
Average Peak Intake	Unknown														
Average Annual Intake	417														
Annual Theoretical Max. Intake															
Annual Theoretical Peak Intake (Avg)															
INTAKES															
	Cats														
	2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019		2019-2020 (part)		Average		5-yr Avg. Combined Cats & Kittens
	Cats	Kittens	Cats	Kittens	Cats	Kittens	Cats	Kittens	Cats	Kittens	Cats	Kittens	Cats	Kittens	
Owner Surrender	46	0	22	0	40	0	20	12	19	13	14	0	20	13	34
Returns from Adoption	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	
Stray Intake	217	0	206	0	147	0	110	89	106	132	52	25	108	111	201
Transfers In	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	8	
Total Intake	263	0	228	0	187	0	131	117	127	145	66	25	129	131	
Owner Requested Euthanasia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Adjusted Total Intake	263	0	228	0	187	0	131	117	127	145	66	25	187	131	240
	263		228		187		248		272		91		240		240
OUTCOMES															
Return to Owner	10	0	16	0	16	0	12	0	15	3	6	0	11	2	14
Adoptions	138	0	136	0	177	0	55	68	48	77	35	20	94	73	140
Transfers to Rescue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Subtotal - Live Release	148	0	152	0	193	0	67	76	63	80	41	20	111		156
Euthanised (Dangerous or Unhealthy)	94	0	51	0	98	0	64	31	75	52	34	9	76	42	
Euthanised (unable to re-home)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Subtotal - Euthanised	94	0	51	0	98	0	64	31	75	52	34	9	76	42	93
Died or Lost in Council Care	2	-	13	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Outcomes	244	0	216	0	294	0	131	107	138	132	75	29	205	120	252
	244		216		294		238		270		104		252		252
SUMMARY															
Live Release Rate	56%	-	67%	-	103%	-	51%	65%	50%	55%	62%		59%		65%
Calculated Population Change	19	0	12	0	-107	0	0	10	-11	13	-9	-4	-17		
Average Monthly Intake	20														
Peak Monthly Intake (Sept 2017)	Unknown														
Average Peak Intake	Unknown														
Average Annual Intake	240														
Annual Theoretical Max. Intake															
Annual Theoretical Peak Intake (Avg)															

7.2 Table B

Wingecarribee Shire Council Pound - Required Animal Capacity Calculatons
Total Holding Capacity based on Average Annual Intake and Target Length of Stay
<p>Input Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 days Target LOS for Dogs 30 Days Target LOS for Cats 417 Average Annual Intake for Dogs 240 Average Annual Intake for Cats <p>Calculated Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16 Pens Required for Dogs 20 Pens Required for Cats
Impound Area Capacity based on Average Annual Intake and Statutory Hold Period
<p>Input Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 days Average Impound for Dogs 8 days Average Impound for Cats 356 Average Annual Intake for Dogs 201 Average Annual Intake for Cats <p>Calculated Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Pens Required for Dogs 5 Pens Required for Cats
Council Adoption Area Capacity Calculations
<p>Input Data</p> <p>Length-of-Stay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 days Average Hold Time in Council Adoption Area for Dogs 46 days Average Hold Time in Council Adoption Area for Cats <p>Historical Average Number of Adoption Animals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 102 dogs/puppies annually 140 cats/kittens annually <p>Calculated Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Pens Required for Dogs based on Historical Average Adoptions 18 Pens or Cages Required for Cats based on Historical Average Adoptions
Total Capacity Based on "per area" Calculations
<p>Dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Dog Impound Pens 6 Dog Adoption Pens <hr/> 14 Total Dog Pens <p>Cats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Cat Impound Pens 18 Cat Adoption Pens <hr/> 23 Total Cat Pens

7.3 Table C

Wingecarribee Shire Council Animal Shelter Building Program						
28-May-20						
Functional Areas				Quant	Size	Net m²
Public Areas						
Entry Vestibule				1	2.5 x 2.5	6.3
Reception/Waiting				1	6 x 4	24.0
Public Toilet (PWD)				1	2.5 x 2.5	6.3
Greeters Desk	2 - 3 staff			1	2.5 x 3.7	9.3
Work/Filing Room				1	2.5 x 3.7	9.3
Owner Surrender / Interview Room				1	3.1 x 3.7	11.5
Cleaner				1	1.3 x 1.3	1.7
Administrative						
Admin Offices	4 open office workstations			4	2.5 x 2.5	25.0
Manager Office				1	2.8 x 3.1	8.7
Meeting Room				1	5.5 x 3.7	20.4
Medical Areas						
Medical Evaluation / Consult				0	2.8 x 3.1	0.0
Treatment/Dental/Surgery Prep Tables				0	3.7 x 3.7	0.0
Lab / Pharmacy Bench				0	2.2 x 3.7	0.0
Surgical Theatre (2-table, high-volume de-sexing)				0	4.2 x 6.5	0.0
Instrument Sterilisation				0	4.2 x 6.5	0.0
Medical Isolation				0	2.5 x 3.7	0.0
X-Ray				0	2.8 x 3.7	0.0
Recovery Holding (Separate Cat & Dog Wards)				0	2.5 x 5	0.0
Animal Impound Areas						
Intake Evaluation & Processing				1	3.2 x 4.2	13.4
Impound/Quarantine Dogs				7	1.3 x 3.1	28.2
Isolation Dogs				4	1.3 x 3.1	16.1
Dog Kennel Prep / & Circulation Areas	(50% kennel area)					22.2
Impound Cats	(2 rooms with 6. pens/cages each)			2	2.5 x 4.5	22.5
Animal Re-homing Areas						
Adoption Dogs				8	1.3 x 3.1	32.2
Dog Adoption Circulation & Support	(50% kennel area)					16.1
Adoption Cats	(3 rooms with 12. pens/cages each)			3	2.3 x 7.5	51.8
Meet & Greet / Interview Rooms				2	2.8 x 3.2	17.9
Personnel						
Staff Break Room	seating for 8			1	3.1 x 5	15.5
Staff Toilets				2	2.2 x 2.5	11.0
Staff Shower				1	2.2 x 2.5	5.5
Support						
Sally Port	(External, not included in total area)			1	7.5 x 12.5	93.8
Food Prep / Utility				1	3.2 x 4.2	13.4
Central Laundry				1	3.2 x 5	16.0
Central Store, General				1	3.2 x 5	16.0
Food Store				1	5 x 5	25.0
Morgue / Walk-in Freezer				1	2.8 x 2.8	7.8
Net Total Proposed Facility						452.9
Grossing Factor				130%		
Gross Total Proposed Facility						588.8

Appendix B

Wingecarribee Animal Shelter

Community Engagement Summary

Meeting Date – 15 July 2021 & Subsequent Email Submissions

Goals and Objectives of the Animal Shelter

- There is a need to confirm a clear vision, goals and strategies for the Animal Shelter. It is suggested that the vision should focus on the outcome of re-homing and minimal euthanasia
 - The vision of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter should be to enhance the welfare of, and enrich the lives of displaced animals prior to re-homing and subsequent adoption and the implementation of a minimal euthanasia policy.
 - Goal – To become a critical piece of community infrastructure that realises the potential of maximising rehoming opportunities, provides high standard of welfare, and also develops important social connections through participation, engagement and providing purpose to volunteers
 - Strategies
 - Increase stakeholder participation including the volunteer base and increasing exercise and socialisation of the animals within the shelter environment
 - Promoting foster care arrangements and organisations as a means of providing care to animals with increased human socialisation rather than isolation in the shelter environment
 - Building capacity and strengthening relationships with breed specific rehoming organisations
 - Increase community awareness of responsible rehoming and responsible companion animal management through a variety of new programs
 - Increase the online presence for promotional and marketing of the shelter and building networks to increase rehoming opportunities
 - Achieving rehoming rates that are in excess of those achieved in other local Government Area across the state and
 - Upholding key commitments contained within the adopted ‘Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy
 - Council’s web site needs to be upgraded to be more inspiring, highlighting the Shelter’s role and the opportunities it provides with a view to attracting additional volunteers
 - Slow updating of the web site means that animals awaiting adoption are not always advertised and animals already adopted are no longer available

Volunteer Policies & Communication

- Induction procedures were developed some time ago but need to be renewed and a systematic process implemented to ensure all volunteers are fully informed of council processes and expectations
- Whilst the specific roles of FOWAS, the Dog Walkers and Cat Cuddlers is reasonably clear a broader overarching Volunteer Policy would assist in clarifying the volunteers' role in Council's overall operations
- Volunteers often feel they are not listened to, forgotten and not valued. Several examples illustrating concerns were provided:
 - Slow responses to requests for basic facilities; a sink for hand washing, access to toilets; no thanks for cleaning the bus shelter; no raising awareness of asbestos remediation nearby, no notification to volunteers of fires in green waste causing evacuation of the facility
 - Little or no acknowledgment by senior council staff or Councillors at meetings including volunteers
- Communication between Council staff and volunteers needs to be improved, increased and clear
 - Greater explanation needs to be provided on the background to decisions
 - A culture of 'you don't need to know about operational issues' does not promote an environment of trust and build teamwork
 - Invitations to a Q and A session with Councillors which was actually a request for volunteers to make a presentation and was poorly communicated
 - Volunteers not recognised at presentations made by Councillors
 - Warnings about the use of the media and social media, where volunteers feel that the only way to get action is to use these channels
 - Volunteers were not informed that the Shelter had been evacuated when green waste fires threatened the Shelter resulting in volunteers travelling long distances at times, only to find it was no longer operational
- More work needs to be undertaken to rebuild relationships between differing groups of volunteers and Council staff
- The replacement of vacant positions at the centre has been extremely slow or even non-existent. This appears to have placed significant pressure on the team leader.

Physical Environment

Numerous concerns were expressed about the facilities available to volunteers, the safety of both staff and volunteers and the time taken for Council to act on requests that sought to improve facilities:

- The shelter is co-located on a tip site – this does result in a number of environmental concerns
 - Constant dust in the air
 - Green Waste – There have been a number of fires in green waste piles in recent years. This has resulted in several evacuations of both staff and animals
 - The size of green waste piles has reduced; however, they are still present and in close proximity to the shelter and are a constant danger in hot weather and high winds
 - Foam is regularly seen blowing around the shelter – it is not known if it is toxic or not

- It would be desirable to create a new entrance for the shelter that avoids customers having to travel over the weighbridge and through the Resource Recovery Site – it would require new fencing for a compound
- The path from the shelter used by dog walkers is badly broken and can be a hazard for even fit dog walkers with the larger, stronger dogs on a lead
- The EPA licence requires a nearby dam to be aerated due to effluent run off into it from the saleyards – on windy days spray from the fountain and sprinklers drifts across the Animal Shelter site into the faces of volunteers and staff, and against the structure itself
- An example of a serious dog attack on another dog in the dog run due to a gap under the fence allowing the dangerous dog to enter. Despite being reported the issue was not addressed with volunteers needing to try and block the hole themselves.
- Overall the facility appears to be forgotten, giving an overall perception that the shelter is a low priority
- It is reported that the shelter has been subject to several break-ins with owners trying to retrieve impounded animals
- CCTV has been installed but it is commonly known that the cameras are regularly not working
- Cat condos are great for smaller cats and new shutters for the kennels provide better weather protection
- There is no public toilet at the shelter
- No accessible facilities (compliant parking, paths of travel, door widths, or toilets)
- New demountable facility will help and could solve some of these problems however there is some concern about:
 - Should a DA have been lodged for it – would it comply if a DA had been required?
 - Concerns about the safety of the demountable being ‘tied down’ with concrete blocks
- Safety of staff is a concern – Customers can be aggressive at times when they are trying to retrieve impounded animals
 - Need for staff training in dealing with difficult people
 - Consider provision of a duress alarm
- Volunteers have tried to improve the amenity of the Animal Shelter eg a large steel art work was donated to cover a large brick wall – Council was to take responsibility for its installation but nothing progressed and the offer of the donation was withdrawn with the art work being donated to another organisation
- Infection control – It took months and ongoing lobbying to secure a hand washing facility (a tiny sink – see image) – a basic piece of hygiene infrastructure - for the volunteers who regularly pick up poo and come in to contact with saliva on toys The sink is against an exterior wall and has no cover. When it rains, if there is any paper in the dispenser, the paper gets wet. Pine needles fall from the trees into the sink. The sink was blocked for weeks requiring a volunteer to unblock it (see image)
- The soap container is not attached to the wall and is often found on the ground. Volunteers regularly provide their own antiseptic handwash to refill the container
- In 2016 following 5 months of lobbying council sourced a disused bus shelter to provide shade, wind and rain protections for the volunteers. Volunteers sought

permission to paint the facility to make it a presentable and useable space. It took 5 months to secure the go ahead due to various concerns with asbestos

- Council does not maintain the bus shelter, the cleaning work being undertaken by volunteers. Volunteers receive no thanks for this or other work (see images)



- Volunteers are responsible for picking up any dog faeces. They provide their own poo bags. Council does not offer to provide poo bags. There is a bag dispenser in the dog run that has been broken for years



- There are no toilet facilities for volunteers. Volunteers have in the past been advised that the toilet at the shelter is unable to be used by the public as it may create a safety issue for staff. Volunteers were directed to use the nearest public toilets in the saleyards (but they are not always open). The present manager has allowed volunteers to use the staff toilet, but it involves a staff member having to accompany the volunteer to unlock the office and then relock it.

- In 2018 the Council Resource Recovery Centre had an incident involving asbestos. A large hessian lined fence adjoining the shelter entrance was erected with a sign “Danger Asbestos”. Behind the hessian a bulldozer was working. Volunteers received no information about the potential risks or anything about what was happening. The staff were working all day in an environment on the other side of the hessian fence that they felt provided little protection from contamination
- Need for dog trainer to provide education and support to volunteers in working with animals
- Many dog walkers have been past members of FOWAS. A number did raise issues in relation to past Memorandums of Understanding between Council and FOWAS. These included:
 - Need to focus FOWAS financial support on additional services for the animals, not fund services that are the core responsibility of Council
 - Council should be responsible for animal desexing, microchipping and registration and vaccinations
 - Need for better clarity around sponsorships and related naming rights
- Doors to storage containers can blow shut with people in them at times

Document Type: Council Policy TRIM reference: DOC/20/6975

Document Status: Draft

Policy Owner (position): Executive Manager Organisational Capability

Internal endorsement required: Not Applicable

Final Approval by: Council

Date approved: 16/06/2020

Evidence of approval: Council – Refer to Notes in TRIM

Version Number: 1 Frequency of Review: 3 years

Review Date: 16/06/2023

Date rescinded: [Click here to enter a date.](#) OR Not applicable

Related legislation: Local Government Act 2020
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Related strategic documents, policies, or procedures: Volunteering Australia’s National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Tool.

Date	Version Number	Details of Version	Modified by
18/02/2020	1	Development of new policy	Executive Manager Organisational Capability

1. Purpose

Mount Alexander Shire Council respects and acknowledges the important contribution that volunteers individually and collectively make towards the success of the Shire.

This policy establishes Council's position in relation to supporting volunteers and the important role they play to assist Council in serving the community. This policy ensures volunteering at Mount Alexander Shire Council is guided by fair and consistent principles and procedures that provide a positive experience and outcomes for volunteers, the community and staff at the Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the Councillors and employees (including full time, part time, casual employees, agency staff and students), contractors, volunteers, and consultants of Mount Alexander Shire Council. It also includes Community Asset Committees established under the Local Government Act 2020.

3. Policy

Council is committed to supporting all volunteers in the contribution they make to the success of the Mount Alexander Shire Council and its community. Council will support volunteers in accordance with Volunteering Australia's National Standards (2015) as follows.

1. Leadership and Management

Council and senior employees lead and promote a positive culture towards volunteering and implement effective management systems to support volunteer involvement.

2. Commitment to Volunteer Involvement

Commitment to volunteer involvement is set out through vision, planning and resourcing, and supports the organisation's strategic direction.

3. Volunteer Roles

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles which contribute to the organisation's purpose, goals and objectives.

4. Recruitment and Selection

Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, consistent and meet the needs of the organisation and volunteers.

5. Support and Development

Volunteers understand their roles and gain the knowledge, skills and feedback needed to safely and effectively carry out their duties.

6. Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers is protected in the workplace.

7. Volunteer Recognition

Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.

8. Quality Management and Continuous Improvement

Effective volunteer involvement results from a system of good practice, review and continuous improvement.

3.1. Roles and responsibilities

It is essential that volunteers and paid staff understand and respect the needs and responsibilities of one another. Volunteers make a valuable contribution to the organisation by undertaking value-added tasks. Volunteers do not replace staff or carry out the work of paid staff.

Volunteer hours and attendance times will be negotiated between the volunteer and their supervisor based on the requirements of the role and the availability of the volunteer. The maximum regular commitment by a volunteer will be capped in line with Volunteering Australia guidelines.

Volunteers at Mount Alexander Shire Council participate in a structured volunteering program with volunteer roles and opportunities reviewed and varied as necessary.

Council will:

- Provide a supportive and safe work environment.
- Communicate clear expectations for volunteer roles.
- Undertake a formal induction program for volunteers which will provide information about the Council and the relevant programs, training, policies and procedures.
- Engage with volunteers on decisions which will substantially affect a volunteer's role and/or performance.
- Provide appropriate support to volunteers to assist them to perform their role, including training and feedback on performance.
- Provide a volunteer supervisor within each program who has the skills and knowledge to develop, support and supervise volunteers.
- Assign volunteers with tasks that are meaningful to Council, the community and the volunteer themselves.

- Ensure that volunteers enhance the work of paid staff and never replace them.

Volunteers will:

- Maintain the same standards of confidentiality, customer service, courtesy, and compliance with Council policies and procedures as are required of paid employees of Council.
- Accept and perform the responsibilities of the volunteer role to the best of their ability and in a positive and reliable manner.
- Take part in induction and ongoing training as required.
- Accept support, supervision and constructive feedback on performance.
- Not represent themselves as an employee of Council.
- Carry out tasks in accordance with the values of Council.

3.2. Recruitment and selection

Volunteering opportunities are available to people aged 18 years and over. Applicants must be permitted to volunteer in Australia under relevant visa conditions if applicable.

All volunteer applications are considered on a merit basis. Assessment of suitability include relevant experience and competencies that demonstrate the ability to achieve agreed outcomes, and capacity to attend at agreed times. Dependent on the role volunteers will be required to undergo a National Police Record Check, have a current Working with Children Check and disclose any pre-existing medical conditions that may impact on their ability to undertake the role.

The offer of a volunteer role at Council is in no way a commitment to an offer of a future paid role at Council.

3.3. Supervision, support, and development

Council is committed to continuous improvement of its volunteer support and management practices, aligned with the Standards.

Council will ensure that volunteers are provided appropriate management, supervision and communication to ensure volunteers are aware of policies, procedures and information relating to their roles. Adequate training, resources and support will be provided to allow volunteers to undertake their role in a safe and effective manner. The relevant volunteer supervisor will routinely review training requirements of volunteers and make adequate provision for ongoing training opportunities that support volunteers in Council service.

Council will reimburse volunteers for use of their own motor vehicles, approved training costs or incidentals as agreed in undertaking a volunteer role with Council.

Volunteers will be treated with respect, fairness and dignity in accordance with the Code of Conduct, National Standards and Human Rights Charter.

3.4. Recognition

Council values the role of volunteers and as such strives to recognise volunteers and the contribution they make. Council will provide an annual event for volunteer recognition and ensure acknowledgment of long term volunteer service with appropriate awards and recognition. Where possible and where appropriate volunteers will be recognised through external Council communication channels.

3.5. Health and safety

Council is committed to providing volunteers with a safe workplace.

On commencement, volunteers will be provided with relevant information and guidelines to ensure the maintenance of a safe and healthy workplace along with training and information regarding emergency procedures.

Council will maintain appropriate insurance cover for volunteers engaged in Council business.

Volunteers are expected to comply with the relevant Council OH&S policies and procedures. Volunteers are required to report all incidents to their supervisor or a member of staff as soon as possible, as outlined in any relevant Council Incident reporting procedures.

4. Definitions of Abbreviations and Terms Used

Term	Definition
Volunteer	A person who undertake activities without monetary reward, of their own free will, of benefit to Council and the local community, that complement but do not replace the services provided by paid staff.
Volunteering	Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.

5. Human Rights Statement

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006).

Wingecarribee Animal Shelter - Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy

LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, STRONG NETWORKS AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SHIRE, PROMOTES AND ENHANCES COMMUNITY CAPACITY.

Adoption Date:	11 December 2019
Council Reference:	MN580/19
Policy Owner:	Group Manager Planning Development and Regulatory Services
Next review date:	11 December 2023
File Reference:	5501/8.7
Related Policies/Legislation:	<i>Companion Animals Act 1998</i> <i>Companion Animals Regulation 2018</i>
Related Documents:	Nil

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that management of companion animals impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter, and where necessary the euthanasia of those animals, complies with the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (the Act), the *Companion Animals Regulation 2018* (the Regulation) and any guidelines as issued by the Departmental Chief Executive.

POLICY STATEMENT

Wingecarribee Shire Council:

- is committed to rehoming all healthy, behaviourally sound companion animals impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter
- aims to minimise the euthanasia of companion animals impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter by considering all possible alternatives to euthanasia and where practicable adopting these alternatives
- recognises that euthanasia of feral and infant companion animals within the legislated holding period may be necessary under veterinary advice.



Wingecarribee Animal Shelter - Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy

Feral and infant animals

In accordance with Section 64(2) of the Act, Council authorises the humane euthanasia of feral and infant animals that are unsuitable for rehoming or where it is considered to be in the best interest of the welfare of the animal following any advice provided by a veterinarian, prior to the standard holding period as set out in Section 64(1) of the Act.

All other companion animals

Section 64(5) of the Act requires that, before euthanasing a seized animal, Council consider whether there is a possible alternative and, if practicable, adopt this alternative. It is Council's policy to comply with section 64(5) wherever possible, however, Council accepts some animals may not be suitable or safe to rehome for health or behavioural reasons. At the conclusion of the applicable holding period required under the Act all animals impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter will be health checked by a veterinarian and temperament assessed by a qualified behavioural assessor to determine suitability for rehoming. Healthy, behaviourally sound animals will be made available for adoption or placed with a suitable rescue organisation.

Council's appointed qualified, professional and registered Veterinarian must recommend euthanasia for an animal if the animal is suffering and that suffering is not able to be adequately minimised or managed. Euthanasia is the act of inducing humane death with the minimum of pain, fear or distress to the animal involved. It is most often used with terminally unwell or injured animals, where the prognosis is considered hopeless, and should also be considered for animals with intractable behaviour problems.

All euthanasia of impounded animals at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter will be undertaken by lethal injection only and be administered by a Veterinarian professional.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all animals which are impounded at the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter whether it is operated under the management of Council or an external third party. Should any future contract be entered into this policy document shall form part of any contractual terms.

The Wingecarribee Animal Shelter accepts stray companion animals from members of the public and those that are impounded by Council's Regulatory Services Unit. The shelter may accept surrenders of animals according to the Act and Regulation, Council's adopted procedures and at the discretion of the Team Leader of Shelter Operations.

Feral animals, usually cats, may be trapped by members of the public and transported humanely to the shelter. Feral animals suffer from significant stress when caged and this stress is considered by animal welfare organisations to be inhumane.



Wingecarribee Animal Shelter - Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy

As feral animals are aggressive and difficult to handle, impounding these animals for any period of time poses a significant work health and safety risk to shelter staff and also the welfare of the animal. Feral animals are not suitable for rehoming and may be euthanised in accordance with Council's adopted procedures.

Litters of stray kittens and puppies can be found without a mother and are transported to the shelter for impounding. In some instances these kittens and puppies may be too young to survive without their mother especially within an animal shelter environment. Council will attempt to place such animals into foster care where available, however if the animals are likely to suffer, they will be euthanised in accordance with Council's procedures and on veterinary advice.

DEFINITIONS

Companion animal: means either a dog or cat.

Infant animal: is an animal generally under 6 weeks of age and still totally reliant on its mother for sustenance and evacuations.

Feral animal: is an animal in wild state showing no signs of domestication.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillors	<p>Councillors should ensure that all new proposals that are brought to their attention have the appropriate community engagement completed (or specified as part of the project report). Councillors should encourage a positive attitude to involving the community at the appropriate level.</p> <p>A Councillor's role is to listen to the community and consider various views when making decisions at Council. Community engagement processes provide valuable opportunities for Councillors to hear and understand the voice of the community and ensure that this voice is properly represented when Council meets and makes resolutions which impact the future of our community.</p>
Executive	<p>Executive should support the community engagement process and encourage the appropriate level of engagement by all staff.</p>



Wingecarribee Animal Shelter - Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy

<p>Staff (Contractors and consultants undertaking engagement on behalf of Council are deemed employees for the purposes of this policy)</p>	<p>Council employees need to be aware of the importance of community engagement and people directly involved in major projects should be trained to the appropriate level of the community engagement techniques and practices (or have access to trained advisers).</p> <p>A Council staff member's role in community engagement is to organise and facilitate the discussion, record, provide feedback, evaluate the engagement and consider the community's views when making unbiased recommendations to Council or committees.</p>
<p>All</p>	<p>Both Councillors and Council staff are encouraged not to dominate or direct community discussions, nor to dismiss the community's input. Instead, Councillors and staff should allow discussions to move forward in an open, respectful and inclusive way.</p>

MEASURES

The success of this Policy will be measured by increasing rehoming rates based on each previous years' rehoming data. The success of the policy will also be measured on full compliance with the policy position.

APPROVED BY:

WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL

11 December 2019



Wingecarribee Animal Shelter - Alternatives to Euthanasia Policy

ATTACHMENTS

1. Nil.

Approved By:

WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL

11 December 2019

