

th March 2023
Minister for ...
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RE: Consider compassionate animal welfare assistance

Dear ,

It is with great concern that we are contacting you today as the Minister responsible for ensuring Animal Welfare in your State to request you provide a reminder to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and Animal Welfare League (AWL) that the community is currently experiencing higher cost of living distress. The RSPCA must reminded that compassion is needed during these times.

As you are by now acutely aware the pressures being endured by constant interest rate rises and other rising costs of living across the board are placing a great deal of pressure on society. Animal Care Australia recently wrote to the Reserve Bank of Australia’s Governor Philip Lowe in order to highlight the need to consider family pets in the bigger picture when they are assessing future interest rate rises.

As you may also be aware, 46 per cent of people are reporting high levels of cost-of-living distress and one in six are reporting having suicidal thoughts. The last thing our community needs right now is a heavy-handed enforcement of minor breaches of animal welfare legislation.

People are now being forced to make decisions about how they live their lives, including needing to cut back on expenses. Prioritising expenses also comes down to not only being able to feed their children – but their pets. We are sure you would agree, pets are an important aspect of the family. Routine pet expenses such as veterinary bills, worming, tick/flea prevention, grooming and even agistment for our larger pets are all expensive necessities – but ones that are more likely to be sacrificed for more important items, and yet are also requirements under animal welfare legislation.

Animal Care Australia acknowledges there will be a minimal number of situations where continued deprivation of necessary care should be pursued, however, we are also conscious of the RSPCA’s ongoing pursuit of greater legislative powers ‘to prevent cruelty before it happens’. While we do not support powers that allow for people to be intimidated before they are guilty of an offence, we do believe this is an opportunity for the RSPCA to utilise its millions of dollars (as reported in each state organisations’ financial reports) and provide assistance to families who may be temporarily struggling to provide certain necessary provisions of care for their pets.

People do not need intimidation and harassment they need compassion and assistance.

The RSPCA (and AWL) could be providing free (via vouchers) grooming, infestation protection, and basic worming assistance. To be made available without judgement or ridicule, either directly or indirectly via local veterinary practices.

This would lead to reducing the number of major animal welfare concerns before animals end up suffering - that is - lets PREVENT instead of PROSECUTE.

Pets are already being surrendered and abandoned because people are being forced out of their homes and into a near non-existent rental market. Where a rental property can be found it is highly unlikely their pets can stay with them. This loss of their family members adds further stress to an already extremely dire situation. Children and the elderly are more greatly affected as they rely heavily on their pets for their mental well-being. Children are the least likely to understand why their pets can no longer stay with them.

What is worse is it is being reported to ACA that most rescues including the Cat Protection Society and RSPCA charge hundreds of dollars to surrender the animals to them. Why? This should also be halted under this current financial impact on people's lives. These organisations already receive funding from both government and the community – it's time that money was put to its intended purpose.

Again, Animal Care Australia is requesting that you intervene now and request that enforcement agencies and rescues consider the welfare of people's pets and animals and provide them with support, compassion and assistance.

Please do not hesitate to make contact if we can assist further.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Donnelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Donnelly
President
0400 323 843

Animal Care Australia (ACA) is a national incorporated association established to consult with government in advocating for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.