



Tuesday, 13 February 2024

Productivity Commission
4 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600, Australia

Submission on behalf of ARC – Philanthropy and the Productivity Commission

Dear Commissioner,

Thank you for the support the Australian Government has provided to the community sector, enabling organisations like ours to assist other Australians in need.

We commend the Productivity Commission's findings. We agree with your feedback and provide data and context.

In animal rescue and welfare, nearly all the activities volunteers undertake to achieve real outcomes for the community do not fit into the narrow scope of the current DGR system.

This not only negatively impacts the community but also limits our volunteers from performing their best and creates significant anxiety within the community.

We have compiled a simple list of activities undertaken by animal rescuers. Of these, only one is covered under the current DGR category, with another only partially covered. It is akin to asking a minister to devise a water solution for Australia but limiting them to only focusing on dams. The full picture is much broader.

The recent report on philanthropy and the Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) system underscores the indispensable role of philanthropy in society. Philanthropy contributes significantly to social capital, innovation, and meeting community needs not fully addressed by government funding. However, the current DGR model is overly complex, lacks coherence, and does not adequately serve the diverse and evolving needs of the philanthropic sector, hindering our ability to maximize the impact of our essential activities.

We advocate for a reformed DGR system that is simplified, fairer, and more transparent, enabling organizations like ours to better contribute to community welfare and development. It is vital to recognize and support a broader range of philanthropic activities, including advocacy, education, and support services. Reforms should also aim to create an enabling environment that supports diverse philanthropic efforts and enhances access and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Similarly, we advocate for measures to reduce exploitation of the system. DGR status should not serve as a shelter for board member salaries, profitable businesses, or private churches to generate income. Instead, eligibility should be determined by the *tangible outcomes delivered*, a criteria the animal rescue sector meets daily.

We appreciate the Commission's consideration of these recommendations to foster a more inclusive, efficient, and supportive regulatory environment. This will not only enhance philanthropic efforts but also ensure that organizations can more effectively meet the growing and diverse needs of our communities.

Sincerely,

Derek Knox
President



The following items may not qualify for DGR in Animal Rescue

Direct actions

- **Desexing Clinics:** Including running programs to reduce stray populations in animals in the community. (Unless they are pets in your direct care)
- **Disaster Response & Providing Disaster Preparedness Education:** Emergency rescue, shelter, and education for pet owners.
- **Veterinary Care Assistance:** Financial aid or veterinary services for low-income pet owners.
- **Animal Therapy Programs & Supporting Veterans with Service Animal Programs:** Partnering with facilities for therapy and providing service animals to veterans.
- **Pet Food Banks:** Operating food banks and supporting recovery of pet industry waste.
- **Providing Safe Havens for Endangered Species:** Participating in breeding programs and habitat protection.
- **Crisis Intervention Services:** Immediate help to animals in danger.
- **Support for the Elderly and Disabled:** Assisting with pet care needs.
- **Facilitating International Animal Rescue Efforts:** For animals in crisis abroad.
- **Providing Mobility Assistance:** Training service animals for people with disabilities.
- **Offering Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Resources:** Education and support.
- **Supporting Non-Traditional Pets:** Through education and rescue efforts.
- **Offering Grief Support for Pet Owners:** Dealing with loss.

Indirect Actions (like Advocacy)

- **Legislative Advocacy:** Advocating for animal welfare laws and regulations.
- **Wildlife Conservation & Supporting Local Biodiversity:** Conservation efforts and activities supporting biodiversity.
- **Community Engagement:** Organizing clean-up or habitat restoration projects.
- **Promoting Sustainability & Creating Awareness Campaigns:** Education on preservation and animal rights.
- **Collaborating with Law Enforcement:** On cases involving animals.
- **Facilitating Pet-Friendly Housing Advocacy:** Increasing community acceptance.
- **Promoting Cultural Preservation:** Protecting indigenous animal breeds.
- **Engaging in Urban Planning:** To create animal-friendly public spaces.

Training

- **Educational Programs & Wildlife Coexistence Education:** Sessions on pet ownership, animal welfare, and living with wildlife.
- **Behavioral Training:** Resources to prevent relinquishment due to behavioral issues.
- **Facilitating Animal-Assisted Learning:** In schools and educational settings.

Support and Awareness

- **Supporting Local Economies:** Through employment and attracting tourism.



- **Promoting Mental Health & Encouraging Physical Health:** Through connections between people and animals, and dog walking groups.
- **Creating Volunteer Opportunities & Volunteer Programs:** Engaging in animal welfare efforts and community service.
- **Offering Pet Adoption Counseling:** To ensure a good match.
- **Hosting Community Events:** Like pet fairs and adoption days.
- **Developing Wildlife Observation Areas & Community Gardens:** For education, enjoyment, and pet-friendly spaces.
- **Creating Online Resources:** For pet care and animal education.
- **Conducting Scientific Studies & Supporting Research:** To improve practices and understand animal health.
- **Providing International Aid:** For countries lacking resources.
- **Creating Memorial Spaces for Pets & Supporting Foster Youth:** Enhancing community bonds and through pet interaction programs.
- **Promoting Inclusive Communities & Enhancing Seniors' Lives:** Facilitating pet access and visitation programs in elder care facilities.

It can be loosely stated that these two do apply.

- **Fostering Programs:** Encouraging and supporting foster care for animals awaiting permanent homes. This directly involves housing animals temporarily until they can be rehomed.
- **Desexing Clinics:** While primarily focused on controlling animal populations, these clinics are often associated with organizations that also engage in direct care and rehoming efforts as part of their broader mission, but the clinics themselves do not directly rehome animals.