



Companion Animal Network Australia leads Animal Shelter Awareness Week, highlighting shelter staff amid rising surrenders and low adoptions

Shelter teams bridge the pet adoption gap while keeping people and pets together

As we approach the festive season, **National Animal Shelter Awareness Week (Nov 4 – 10)** serves as a reminder of the unwavering dedication of animal shelter staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to care for animals in need.

Leading national animal welfare charity Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN or CANA) applauds the remarkable efforts of its member shelters, which work not only to provide essential care for thousands of stray and abandoned animals but also to keep people and their pets together, especially during challenging times.

“Now more than ever, it’s crucial to acknowledge the vital role shelters play, as rising cost-of-living pressures have led to a high number of pet surrenders, putting a strain on facilities across the country,” says Trish Ennis, CEO of CANA.

CANA is comprised of member agencies [Animal Welfare League QLD](#), [Dogs’ Homes of Tasmania](#), [Sydney Dogs and Cats Home](#), [Saving Animals From Euthanasia Inc \(WA\)](#) and [Lort Smith Animal Hospital](#).

Data consolidated from CANA members reveal a **11.6% increase** in pet surrenders between the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 fiscal years.

“As we approach Christmas, the pressure on shelters intensifies as more families are faced with the heartbreaking decision to surrender their pets, primarily due to cost-of-living pressures,” says Ms. Ennis.

Many families are struggling to find pet-friendly accommodation, while others are moving into aged care facilities that don’t allow pets, both of which contribute to the increasing number of surrendered companion animals.

“Declining adoption rates and low reclaim numbers are further exacerbating the burden on shelters, which are desperately seeking more foster carers and donors to help care for the influx of animals,” she adds.

“Despite these challenges, shelter workers and volunteers continue to go above and beyond to ensure every animal receives the love and care they deserve. This week, we celebrate their hard work and highlight the critical role animal shelters play in our communities.”



Credit: Dogs' Homes of Tasmania



Credit: Animal Welfare League Queensland

Together, CANA and its member organisations have over 300 years of combined experience caring for and rehoming lost, abandoned, surrendered and mistreated animals.

“We also work to support the thousands of Australians who live with a companion animal,” says Ms. Ennis. “Our goal is to preserve the bond between people and their pets by working to keep them together for as long as it is in the best health interest of both the animal and their owner. Keeping families together not only improves animal welfare but also enriches the lives of the people who love them.”

CANA promotes the human-animal bond and responsible pet ownership through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives such as [Pets in Aged Care](#), [Rent with Pets](#) and [Pets in Business](#) programs.

CANA encourages the public to get involved by adopting, donating or volunteering to help ease the burden on shelters. For more information about CANA's programs or how you can support CANA member shelters, visit <https://australiacan.org.au>

#AnimalShelterAppreciationWeek

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MEDIA CONTACT

Caroline Zambrano, PR Manager, Companion Animal Network Australia
media@australiacan.org.au | 0403 550 730

IMAGES & CASE STUDIES UPON REQUEST

QUOTES:

Mark Wild, CEO of Dogs' Homes of Tasmania

“Despite facing significant financial pressures, Dogs' Homes of Tasmania remains steadfast in its commitment to saving animal lives, helping around 770 lost dogs return home and 771 abandoned and surrendered dogs find new families this year alone.

It's more expensive than ever for the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania to operate with increasing numbers of sick and older dogs being surrendered, which require more resources to care for before they are ready for adoption. Despite the immense financial pressure, the Dogs' Homes work hard to rehome the dogs as quickly as possible to ensure the shelters don't reach capacity.

Our shelters aren't full because we work so hard to get the dogs adopted as quickly as possible. We are trying to only have a dog stay with us for five to seven days on average, because we know the shelter environment is not ideal for them. It can be really stressful for dogs. So, we try to get them into a new, loving home as quickly as possible and we use all the resources we have to ensure the shelters don't become full.”

Caroline Esera, Marketing & Communications Manager of Animal Welfare League Queensland

“Animal Welfare League Queensland (AWLQ) is deeply committed to keeping people and their pets together through various life-saving initiatives and community outreach programs. From offering affordable veterinary services through our Community Vet Clinics to senior support programs for pet owners, we understand the profound bond between humans and animals and strive to prevent unnecessary separation where possible.

Our work includes supporting people in challenging times through community outreach programs such as our Pet Pantry and Homeless Connect services, which provide vital resources such as pet food and vet

care to people in need. Our Emergency Boarding program offers temporary pet boarding for people who require hospitalisation and need our support with help taking care of their pet.”

Like many shelters around the country, AWLQ is facing significant challenges this year due to the cost-of-living crisis and the community members struggling to find suitable pet-friendly accommodation, forcing many people to make the heartbreaking decision to surrender their pets to us, which in turn places a greater burden on our shelters.

Adoption rates are down and surrender rates are up, further compounding the issue. AWLQ works tirelessly to support their community and find loving homes for thousands of animals every single year, but it does come at a cost. We rely heavily on the generosity of our donors and supporters and the kindness of our foster carers to ensure we can continue to help save thousands of lives every year.”

Jennifer Donaldson, Business Manager, Lort Smith – Campbellfield

“At Lort Smith, we are deeply committed to providing life-saving care and finding loving new homes for surrendered animals. It is our philosophy that we will never euthanise an animal that is capable of being rehomed, no matter how long it takes. Last year, we successfully rehomed 631 animals and fostered 679 through our dedicated network of carers.

Many animals we rehome also require significant and expensive veterinary treatments, and last year, we provided urgent veterinary care to 552 animals within our shelter. Despite the challenges posed by rising surrender rates, our team continues to work tirelessly to ensure every animal receives the care and attention they deserve.

With the rising cost of living affecting many in our community, we see an increasing need for our services as more people face the heartbreaking decision to surrender their pets. Our Adoption Centre is 100% donor-funded, and we rely on their support to continue this vital work. We are proud to play a vital role, helping bridge the gap between surrender and adoption and ensuring that vulnerable animals can find new, loving homes.”

About Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN)

Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) is a registered charity representing the companion animal welfare work of our six member agencies across the country, including Animal Welfare League QLD, Lort Smith (VIC), Sydney Dogs and Cats Home, Dogs' Homes of Tasmania and Saving Animals From Euthanasia Inc (WA).

Together, our members provide rescue, shelter, re-homing, fostering, health care and enrichment services to more than 50,000 animals every year. Through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, we celebrate the human-animal bond and promote responsible pet ownership. We use our national voice to campaign for the humane treatment of all companion animals and we rally support for programs that deliver high welfare standards.

Australia CAN celebrates the human-animal bond and promotes responsible pet ownership through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, including the Rent with Pets and Pets in Aged Care programs. To discover more, visit www.australiacan.org.au