



# RSPCA NSW HOMELESSNESS & EMERGENCY BOARDING

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**2023**

# RSPCA NSW HOMELESSNESS & EMERGENCY BOARDING

## SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT REPORT 2023

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### RESEARCH TEAM

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### DISCLAIMER:

Please be advised this report contains discussions of mental illness and suicide. If you need help, the following support services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14 - [Lifeline.org.au](http://Lifeline.org.au) | **Beyondblue:** 1300 224 636 - [Beyondblue.org.au/forums](http://Beyondblue.org.au/forums)

All names in this report, including the names of animals, have been changed to protect the identity of the research participants and their animals.

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# HIGHLIGHTS



The Program generated **\$8.21 of social value** for every \$1 invested.



**90% of clients** experienced **improved mental health and wellbeing** thanks to the Program.



**12,206 nights of crisis accommodation** provided for 627 animals in FY20-21.



The outcome most valued by Program clients was **being able to keep their companion animal**.

🗨️ When you're in the situation I was in – a crisis situation – you're not connected to anything. You're quite alone and even though there were services around me the cats kept me focused on what I needed to do. Do you know what I mean? It wasn't all lost. The girls were coming with me and that made it sort of better. [When I knew the cats were safe] it was just like "I'm good now. I can do anything." It was just really, really important that I had them there and I knew that they were coming back. Yep 100%, that was just everything. 🐾

AMBER  
CLIENT





# RECOMMENDATIONS



## 01

**Increase funding to expand services** to better meet the demand for RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program. Increased funding will **allow an expansion of crisis services**, both in capacity and location across the state, with a particular focus on the regions.

## 02

Policy makers and human social support service providers need to **consider the importance of the human/animal bond and the role that pets play as family and supporting people's mental health** in times of crisis when creating policy, providing funding, and developing services.

## 03

More focused and active collaboration and information sharing between agencies and sectors supporting people in short term homelessness or crisis accommodation, **recognising the value of preserving the human animal bond beyond short term crisis events.**





# BACKGROUND

## The RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program supports people and their pets experiencing homelessness or crises, including acute hospitalisations and natural disasters.

The animals of those experiencing crises can be left in dangerous situations or without care while their owners access refuge or treatment. While separation from their companion animals might be unavoidable for a period, being able to reunite the family unit when possible is invaluable. Companion animals provide support, comfort and encouragement at times when these are of most value<sup>1</sup>.

There are more than 116,000 people experiencing homelessness at any given night in Australia, a rate that is increasing<sup>2</sup>. Homelessness is associated with an increased risk of psychiatric illness, substance abuse, poorer physical health and reduced life expectancy<sup>3</sup>. For those experiencing homelessness, animals provide companionship and familial connection, warmth and comfort<sup>4</sup>. Having a companion animal is associated with motivation, resilience, responsibility, self-care, connection with others, sense of purpose and decreases feelings of loneliness,

risk of depression and suicide<sup>4</sup>. In addition, despite misconceptions to the contrary, the animals of those experiencing homelessness can enjoy excellent welfare, having constant companionship, freedom and a stimulating environment. However, caring for an animal can prevent help-seeking behaviour and can limit access to public transport, employment, medical care, and can result in people being refused housing<sup>5</sup>. It is common for those experiencing homelessness to choose to continue to live outdoors rather than be housed without their animal companions<sup>6</sup>. Hence, having a companion animal can make it more difficult to seek safe accommodation. In addition, more than 275,000 people were admitted to hospital overnight for mental health in 2019-20 in Australia, the average length of stay in NSW being 18 days<sup>7</sup>, leaving many companion animals with nowhere to go.

Caring for companion animals can be an important barrier to people seeking

help for themselves<sup>8</sup>. Animals left behind can cause people experiencing crises more worry, anxiety and depression, while concern for their animal's safety can negatively impact a person's recovery<sup>9</sup>.

Programs that support those experiencing homelessness or various crises with their companion animals are a vital component of aiding recovery. When their animals are safe and cared for, people can focus on their own recovery and safety. For those who have experienced a trauma with their animals, having survived together creates an even stronger bond between human and animal. Hence, being able to escape and recover together is essential<sup>10</sup>. Keeping people together with their companion animals, or ensuring they are reunited as soon as possible, can reduce stressors and improve outcomes for people and animals<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Hines, L.M. 2003. Historical perspectives on the Human-Animal Bond. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 47 : 7-15. Doi:10.1177/000276203255206

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2021. *Homelessness and homelessness services*; Canberra

<sup>3</sup> Davies, A., Wood, L.J. 2018. Homeless health care: meeting the challenges of providing primary care. *Medical Journal of Australia*. 209 : 230-234

<sup>4</sup> Cleary, M., West, S., Visentin, D., Phipps, M., Westman, M., Veski, Kornhaber, R. 2021. The unbreakable bond: the mental health benefits and challenges of pet ownership for people experiencing homelessness. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*. 42 : 741-746

<sup>5</sup> Howe, L., Easterbrook, M.J. 2018. The perceived costs and benefits of pet ownership for homeless people in the UK: practical costs, psychological benefits and vulnerability. *Journal of Poverty*. 22 : 486-499. Doi:10.1080/10875549.2018.1460741

<sup>6</sup> Bukowski, K., Buetow, S. 2011. Making the invisible visible: a photovoice exploration of homeless women's health and lives in central Auckland. *Social Science & Medicine*. 72 : 739-746, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.11.029>

<sup>7</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2022. *Mental health services in Australia*. Available online: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-australia/report-contents/overnight-admitted-mental-health-related-care> (Accessed 5th September 2022)

<sup>8</sup> McCosker, L., Downes, M.J., Maujean, A., Hill, N. 2020. Services and interventions for people who are homeless with companion animals (pets). *Social Science Protocols*. 3 : 1-12

<sup>9</sup> Hageman, T., Langenderfer-Magruder, L., Geene, T., Williams, J., St. Mary, J., McDonald, S., Ascione, F. 2018. Intimate partner violence survivors and pets: exploring practitioners' experiences in addressing client needs. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*. 99 : 134-145. Doi:10.1177/1044389418767836

<sup>10</sup> Haden, S., McDonald, S., Booth, L., Ascione, F., Blakelock, H. 2018. An exploratory study of domestic violence: perpetrators' reports of violence against animals. *Anthrozoos*. 31 : 337-352, doi:10.1080/08927936.2018.1455459

<sup>11</sup> Levine, G., Allen, K., Braun, L., Christian, H., Friedmann, E., Taubert, K., Thomas, S., Wells, D., Lange, R. 2013. Pet ownership and cardiovascular risk. *Circulation*. 127 : 2353-2363, doi:10.1161/cir.0b013e31829201e1

# RSPCA NSW HOMELESSNESS AND EMERGENCY BOARDING PROGRAM

**The RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program provides practical solutions for pet owners experiencing a range of difficulties, enabling them to keep their animal companions while they focus on their own safety, recovery or treatment.**

The Program works with clients who are currently homeless or living in insecure accommodation, and those experiencing other challenges caring for their companion animals, for example with mental health and disability. The Program helps to keep animals together with their family in the long term.

The Program provides case management, boarding, transport, assistance to access veterinary treatment, and other support as needed.

Individuals are eligible for the program if they are in hospital or temporary accommodation that

does not allow pets and they have no support network (friends or family) who can help. Clients either self-refer or are referred by the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate, police, hospitals, housing or other social support services.

RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program case workers collaborate with other housing and social support services to ensure clients can access supports they need to find suitable accommodation so they can be reunited with their animals as soon as possible.

Assistance was provided to 627

animals belonging to 259 clients in the 2020-21 financial year. Of these, 446 animals accessed emergency boarding or foster care, spending a total of 12,206 days in care. Veterinary treatment was also facilitated for 296 of these animals, worth \$71,291 in total.

🏠 **For the first time I had some actual choices. When you are in crisis, your animal's welfare is so at risk.** 🐾

**JENNIFER**  
CLIENT





# NOEL & IZZY

**At the end of 2021, a community support worker reached out to RSPCA NSW seeking assistance to board Noel's dog, Izzy.**

Noel's older brother had tragically passed away, leaving Noel without a carer. Noel was heartbroken and lost. The only thing keeping him going was the one love he and his brother shared, Izzy their beautiful dog.

**Noel had told his support workers he could not live without Izzy. She was the only family he had left.**

Noel was unable to stay at the property he had shared with his brother, instead he moved into emergency accommodation. Noel and his support workers were desperate to find a safe, temporary place for Izzy as she was not allowed to stay in the emergency accommodation with Noel.

RSPCA NSW took Izzy in under the **RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program** while Andrew's support services assisted him to find a property where he and Izzy could live together. After Noel & Izzy had been separated for four months, Noel was finally approved for a new home. Izzy was ecstatic when she saw Noel, their bond remained as strong as ever.



*Noel and Izzy reunited at their new home.*

🔗 Our Community Program is so important in keeping owners and their pets together.

Everyone faces challenges and hardships in life but unfortunately with clients, they are socially isolated and face these challenges alone.

It is heart-warming to know we can be there as a form of support, helping keep their small family unit together when all they have is each other. 🐾

**NOEL AND IZZY'S  
RSPCA NSW CASE WORKER**

# ABOUT SROI



**Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an evaluation approach based on methodologies used in economics, accounting, and social research<sup>12</sup>. It assesses how change is created by measuring social outcomes as experienced by key stakeholders.**

The participatory approach allows stakeholders including program participants and partner organisations to directly contribute to documenting what changes due to a program and how outcomes are valued.

The SROI approach is built on seven principles:

1. involve stakeholders,
2. understand what changes,
3. value the things that matter,
4. only include what is material,
5. do not overclaim,
6. be transparent,
7. verify the results.

Social value is calculated by placing financial value on the changes that occur for stakeholders using financial proxies.

SROI also considers what would have happened anyway and change that is attributable to other actors. For example, for the outcome 'improved mental health and wellbeing' as experienced by program clients, we have used the cost of a typical mental health plan (six sessions with a psychologist at \$210 per session) as the financial proxy.

<sup>12</sup> Social Value International. 2009. *The Guide to SROI*. Available online: <https://www.socialvalueint.org/guide-to-sroi> (Accessed 26th August 2022)



# OUR APPROACH

Stakeholders for the RSPCA Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program were identified through interviews with Program staff involved in service design, planning and delivery.

The materiality of stakeholders was determined through discussion with Program staff and validated during stakeholder interviews. Stakeholder interviews explored who experiences change as a result of the Program, which stakeholders influence the change experienced, and the nature of the change (Figure 1).

The SROI investigated outcomes for four stakeholder groups:

1. Clients,
2. Animals of clients,
3. RSPCA NSW Inspectors,
4. Animal pounds and shelters.

understand what changes because of the Program (including positive, negative, intended and unintended) and who experiences the change. Client perspectives were also collected via an online survey, which received 29 responses.

In depth interviews were conducted with three clients, eight RSPCA NSW Inspectors and two external stakeholders; one from an aged care service provider, and one from a local council. Interviews were conducted to

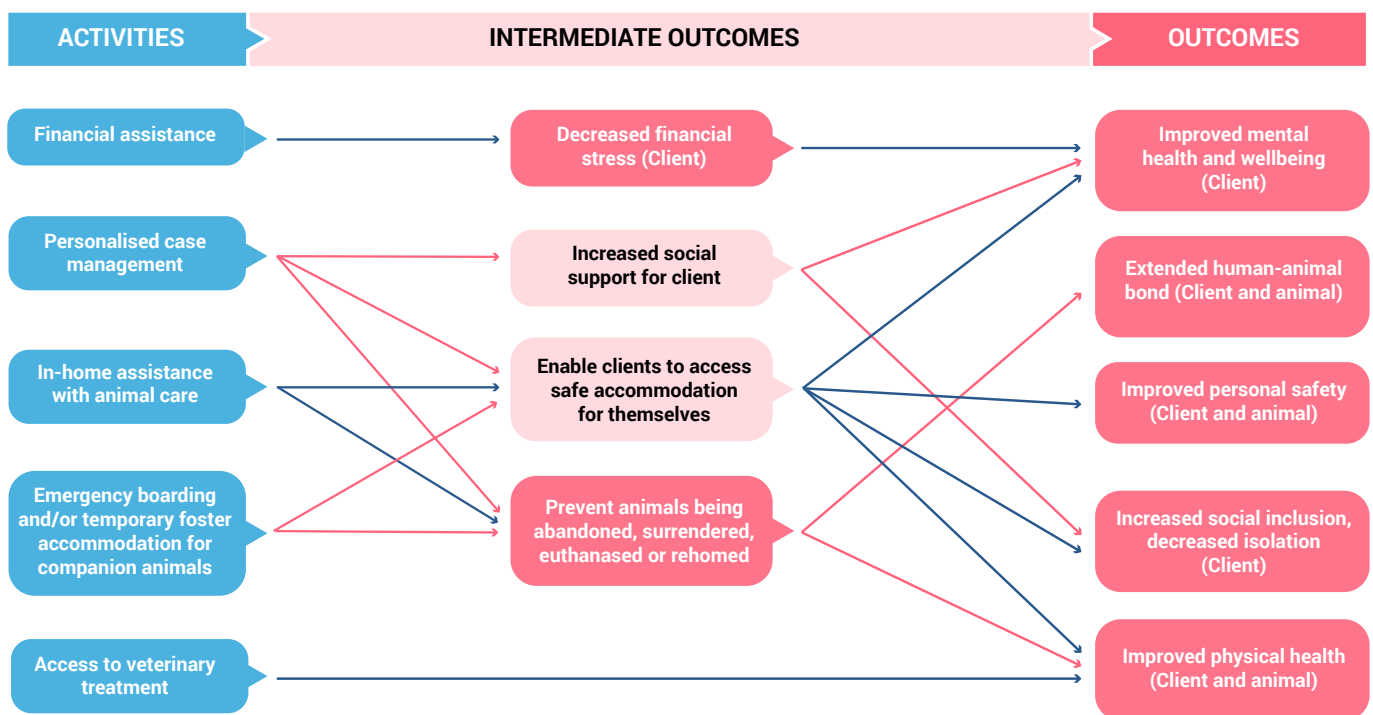


Figure 1: How change is created as a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program





👂 [The most valuable thing was] knowing there is help out there, as I am a single mum and do not have a job, so I could not afford the vet treatment. I would have been forced to surrender her, but because of RSPCA NSW's help we could stay together as a family and I am so grateful to be able to pay this off, it means everything to me. RSPCA NSW will never know how much I appreciate what they have done for us. 🐾

DIANA  
CLIENT

Stakeholder	Number	Outcome	Value per outcome	Net social value	Total social value
Clients	259	Extended or enhanced human-animal bond	\$ 3,453	\$ 1,554,223	\$ 2,887,569
		Improved mental health and wellbeing	\$ 5,320	\$ 574,429	
		Decreased financial stress	\$ 2,058	\$ 376,068	
		Increased social inclusion/ decreased isolation	\$ 2,778	\$ 242,274	
		Improved personal safety	\$ 3,427	\$ 85,394	
		Improved access to care for themselves	\$ 413	\$ 29,143	
		Improved physical health	\$ 1,140	\$ 26,039	

## 2. CLIENT'S ANIMALS

Thanks to the RSPCA NSW, client's animals were able to access safe accommodation and veterinary treatment and hence experienced improved safety and physical health. Clients' animals also experienced improved wellbeing as a result of

being able to return to their families. The alternative described by clients if they were unable to access assistance was overwhelmingly that they would have had to surrender, rehome or euthanise their animal.

“ [Without RSPCA NSW] it would have been the end of my dog as I would have had to have her euthanased. ”

**BRIAN**  
CLIENT

Stakeholder	Number	Outcome	Value per outcome	Net social value	Total social value
Clients' animals	627	Improved wellbeing as a result of preserving the human-animal bond	\$ 1,380	\$ 1,249,542	\$ 2,151,633
		Access to safe accommodation	\$ 1,925	\$ 801,776	
		Improved physical health	\$ 241	\$ 100,315	

“ [Without RSPCA NSW] my kids would have been heartbroken as we would have had to surrender her. ”

**DIANA**  
CLIENT



### 3. RSPCA NSW INSPECTORATE

Animals that are assisted by the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program might otherwise be referred to the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate for several reasons. Animals might be abandoned at a property without care when a client is taken to hospital, or evicted. Animals might also be referred for investigation by the Inspectorate for possible neglect or failure to provide veterinary care. Through the Inspectorate, these cases are investigated and potentially prosecuted under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979, the animals would be seized and taken into RSPCA NSW custody, separated from their families and housed in an animal shelter.

Without community assistance programs like the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, taking animals into custody can be the only option available to Inspectors to ensure the safety of the animals involved. Hence, the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate was determined to be an important

stakeholder. In-depth interviews with eight RSPCA NSW Inspectors were used to determine the type and frequency of outcomes experienced.

The Inspectors all noted their frustration and distress that the need for services like those provided by the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program far outstrips the caseload capacity limits of the Program, and as a result the Inspectorate see many cases that are unable to access the important assistance offered through this Program.

Several Inspectors described feelings of moral distress, which has been defined as the experience of painful feelings and psychological disequilibrium that occurs when one is aware of the morally proper decision that needs to be made without being able to make it due to limitations such as a lack of time or available resources<sup>13</sup>. Moral distress and its deleterious effects on health, job performance and wellbeing has been well described amongst care-giving and first responder professions including nursing, occupational therapy, social work, and police<sup>13</sup>. Inspectors described



feelings of moral regret when responding to and actioning cases that would be more appropriately managed by a case worker through the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program.

The RSPCA NSW Inspectorate were considered to have experienced two outcomes as a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program:

1. More time available to pursue genuine cruelty offences.
2. Improved mental health of RSPCA NSW Inspectors.

Stakeholder	Number	Outcome	Value per outcome	Net social value	Total social value
RSPCA NSW Inspectorate	35	More time available to pursue genuine cruelty offences	\$ 2,730	\$ 71,089	\$ 103,900
		Improved mental health of RSPCA NSW Inspectors	\$ 1,260	\$ 32,810	

<sup>13</sup> Papazoglou, K. and Chopko, B. 2017. The role of moral suffering (moral distress and moral injury) in police compassion fatigue and PTSD: An unexplored topic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, p.1999.



“ It's a huge relief to have programs available to assist. If I had more cases that programs couldn't assist with, I'd feel stressed, and it would be quite difficult. I can go home and sleep at night and not worry that I left the dog in an environment that wasn't ideal and there's no monitoring. Or I'm going to have to take someone through a court system for something that I know ahead of time, it's going to go under the Mental Health Act. You have to question why you're taking that route in the first place. But if there are significant animal welfare issues and you can't leave the animal, you've got no other choice. I mean, I would hate to be plagued with that on my mind because my mental health will start to be affected and I'd probably end up needing assistance myself. ”

**RSPCA NSW INSPECTOR**



## 4. ANIMAL POUNDS AND SHELTERS

The RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program prevented animals arriving at shelters or pounds by reducing the number of animals abandoned without care or surrendered. Abandoned and surrendered animals often experience considerable distress when separated from their families and placed in a shelter environment. They are not always medically or behaviourally suitable to be rehomed, in which case they might be euthanased. Those who are suitable to be rehomed can require substantial investments of time and resources to get them behaviourally and medically ready for adoption.

“ I was very stressed at the time and financially strained. [Without RSPCA NSW] I would have had to surrender my animals. ”

ANGELA  
CLIENT



Stakeholder	Number	Outcome	Value per outcome	Net social value	Total social value
Animal pounds and shelters	233	Fewer animals surrendered (233 animals; 37% of clients reported their animal would have been rehomed or surrendered)	\$ 686	\$89,832	\$ 134,078
	54	Fewer animals abandoned (54 animals; 9% of clients reported their animal would have been abandoned without care)	\$ 885	\$ 44,246	



“ They would've taken my dog away from me if I couldn't find help. ”

NATHAN  
CLIENT



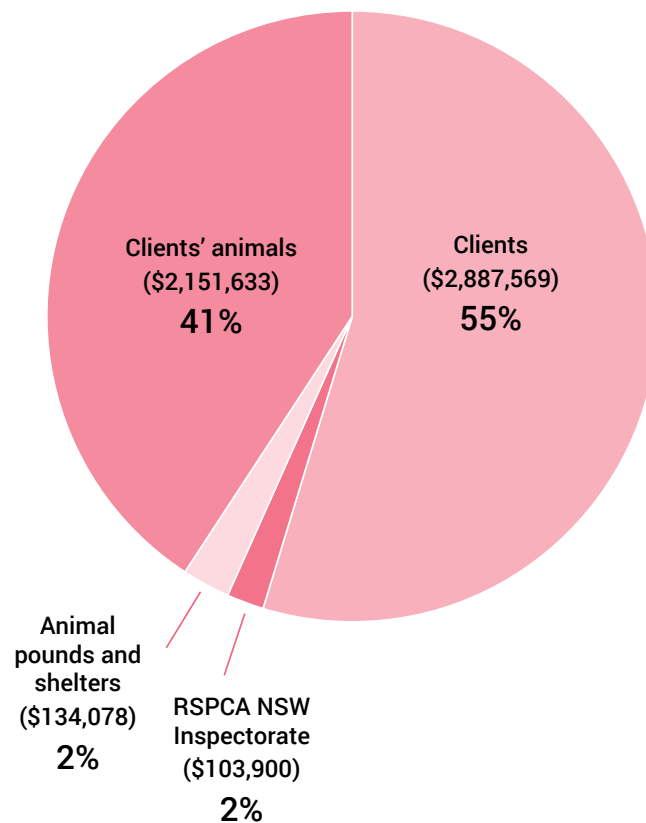
# THE RATIO<sup>†</sup>

Number of participants	Investment (present value)	Benefits (present value)	Social value per \$1 invested
259	\$ 642,489	\$ 5,277,179	\$ 8.21

Just over half of the total value generated by the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program in FY2020-21 was experienced by clients (Figure 3). Outcomes experienced by clients

were valued at more than \$2.8 million in total, with an average of \$11,149 worth of value generated per client. Clients' animals experienced two fifths of the total value created, with the remaining value divided between

the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate and animal pounds and shelters.



**Figure 3:** Value of outcomes experienced because of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program by stakeholder group

<sup>†</sup> Refer to Appendix 2 for more detail



“ [Without RSPCA NSW] it would be a lot different. My life would be a little bit empty without them because I've spent the last 10 years looking after them. My life would feel empty without them. Like if you have animals and cats in your life and then all of a sudden you don't have them, because you had an accident and went to hospital, and the cats get re-homed, you know that would be a devastating thing to go through. I would miss them terribly. And even small jobs like cleaning the kitty litter and stuff like that. There's nothing that can replace the happiness having a cat can bring you. I'd hate it and the animals wouldn't like it either. ”

**SCOTT**  
CLIENT

# INSIGHTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program is there for people experiencing the greatest challenges of their lives. Companion animals can be critical for crisis recovery, providing a sense of safety, family, purpose, routine and a source of unconditional, judgement free love, affection and understanding. Companion animals are often present with their person throughout their journey, there side-by-side as they experience some of their hardest days together. For those experiencing homelessness, physical or mental health crises, or any other crisis, the support and encouragement they receive from their animal companions can be literally lifesaving.

Many people assisted by the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program are otherwise completely socially isolated. A call to the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate with

a cruelty or neglect complaint can often be the first indication a socially isolated person with an animal is not coping. Providing support to that person with their animal can be an invaluable opportunity to connect them with other services that might otherwise have been refused.

There is currently a desperate shortage of crisis accommodation options for animals. Wholistic programs like the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program need to be expanded to keep animals together with their person. There is also a need for greater integration of services that consider animals as part of a person's family unit and part of their social support system. A companion animal can be a person's greatest strength – it is so important for those animals to be there on the other side of a crisis.



“ [My cats] are the reason I feel carpet under my feet in the morning. Over the years my life got to the point where I've lost so much, and not just material stuff and money, but all the other shit that goes with it, and they were my anchor. They made me come home every night. Be there to feed them by 6 o'clock every. Single. Day. I'm up every single morning to put food in their bowls. Their bowls are washed out religiously. These are the things I've got to do every day. That's what the cats mean to me. They basically took the place of an antidepressant.” ”

**AMBER**  
CLIENT



“ It’s brilliant to be able to have people to take care of him as he is my first priority. ”

**ERICA**  
CLIENT

“ He is my life, my baby, I love him and wouldn’t know how to live or carry on without him. ”

**SHANE**  
CLIENT



“ Our animals are our world, they are part of the family, we would do anything for them and they mean everything to us. ”

**VINCENT**  
CLIENT

“ She’s our everything mate, she’s our world. ”

**SHANE**  
CLIENT



“ [The most valuable thing was] being able to find a place for us and have a happy result from everything. It was very close, had the papers to surrender her and could not hand them over. Because RSPCA NSW was there, I was able to make things work. ”

**VANESSA**  
CLIENT



“ He means everything to me. He is my life. He is the only one that I have in my life. He keeps me sane. I don’t know what I would do or where I would be without him. He is very special to me. He’s not just a pet, he is my companion and my support. He is my everything. I cannot see myself living without him. I am one of the lucky ones to have a dog. ”

**KIMBERLEY**  
CLIENT



“ [The most valuable thing was] relief knowing I can access vet treatment and pay it off and keep my baby. ”

**CHRISTY**  
CLIENT

“ Helping my dog so she wasn't in pain and being able to keep her without going broke. ”

**VINCENT**  
CLIENT



“ Just knowing they are safe and looked after brought me peace of mind. ”

**DAWN**  
CLIENT



“ With the help of RSPCA NSW, I was able to make my dog's last few months of life very comfortable and I was able to grieve knowing I had done all I could. She is with my mum and dad now in a better place and I can hold onto that. It has helped immensely with the mental health side of things. ”

**COREY**  
CLIENT

# RSPCA NSW HOMELESSNESS & EMERGENCY BOARDING

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## APPENDICES



# APPENDIX 1

## EVIDENCING OUTCOMES

Outcomes resulting from participation in the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program for clients, their animals, and for animal pounds and shelters were identified through interviews with clients, human service providers and RSPCA NSW Inspectors. Measurable indicators were identified to quantify the amount of each outcome experienced for each stakeholder group. These indicators were measured using a client questionnaire and RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program case records to determine outcome incidence (Tables 1-4). Additional outcomes experienced by the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate were identified and quantified through interviews with RSPCA NSW Inspectors.

**Table 1:** Outcome incidence experienced by clients of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program

Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
Extended or enhanced human-animal bond	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My relationship with my animal/s.	Likert scale	17	0	59%	93%
	What would have happened to your animal/s if RSPCA NSW could not assist you? Euthanased, rehomed, surrendered to a shelter or pound.	Multiple choice	15	N/A	52%	
	What are the most valuable changes that have happened for you as a result of your experience with the RSPCA NSW? What do you think would be different for you now if you had not accessed assistance for your animal/s through RSPCA NSW?	Open-ended	3	0	10%	

Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
Improved mental health and wellbeing	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? How worried I feel about my animal/s (e.g. their safety, health and/or wellbeing).	Likert scale	21	2	66%	90%
	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My sense of wellbeing.	Likert scale	20	2	59%	
	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My mental health.	Likert scale	20	4	55%	
Increased social inclusion/ decreased isolation	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My sense of being.	Likert scale	21	1	69%	72%
	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? How connected I feel to my community.	Likert scale	10	3	31%	
	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My relationships with friends and family.	Likert scale	9	0	31%	

Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
Decreased financial stress	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? How worried I feel about money.	Likert scale	22	1	72%	76%
	What are the most valuable changes that have happened for you as a result of your experience with the RSPCA NSW? What do you think would be different for you now if you had not accessed assistance for your animal/s through RSPCA NSW?	Open-ended	1	0	3%	
Improved access to care for themselves	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My ability to access services for myself (e.g. drug and alcohol, mental health, physical rehabilitation, respite, other).	Likert scale	16	0	55%	59%
	What are the most valuable changes that have happened for you as a result of your experience with the RSPCA NSW? What do you think would be different for you now if you had not accessed assistance for your animal/s through RSPCA NSW?	Open-ended	1	0	3%	



Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
Improved personal safety	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My ability to find somewhere safe to live.	Likert scale	12	0	41%	41%
Improved physical health	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My physical health and fitness.	Likert scale	14	3	38%	38%

**Table 2:** Outcome incidence experienced by the animals of clients of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program

Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
Improved wellbeing as a result of preserving or improving the human-animal bond	As a result of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program, how have the following things changed for you? My relationship with my animal/s.	Likert scale	21	0	72%	91%
	What would have happened to your animal/s if RSPCA NSW could not assist you? Euthanased, rehomed, surrendered to a shelter or pound.	Multiple choice	18	N/A	62%	
	What are the most valuable changes that have happened for you as a result of your experience with the RSPCA NSW? What do you think would be different for you now if you had not accessed assistance for your animal/s through RSPCA NSW?	Open-ended	3	0	10%	

Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
Improved physical health	What kind of assistance did you access for your animal/s? Veterinary treatment.	Multiple choice	22	N/A	63%	71%
	What would have happened to your animal/s if RSPCA NSW could not assist you? Euthanased.	Multiple choice	5	N/A	17%	
Access to safe accommodation	Number of animals accessing emergency boarding.	Program data	25	N/A	71%	71%

**Table 3:** Outcome incidence experienced by RSPCA NSW Inspectors because of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program

Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
More time available to pursue genuine animal cruelty offenses	What are the most valuable changes that have happened for you because of your experience with the RSPCA NSW Community Programs? What do you think would be different for you now if the RSPCA NSW Community Programs were no longer available?	Interview	8	0	100%	80%
Improved mental health	What are the most valuable changes that have happened for you because of your experience with the RSPCA NSW Community Programs? What do you think would be different for you now if the RSPCA NSW Community Programs were no longer available?	Interview	8	0	100%	80%

**Table 4:** Outcome incidence experienced by animal pounds and shelters because of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program

Outcome	Indicator Question	Indicator Type	Number of Responses Positive	Number of Responses Negative	Net Indicator Incidence	Outcome Incidence
<b>Fewer animals abandoned</b>	What would have happened to your animal/s if RSPCA NSW could not assist you? Abandoned without care.	Multiple choice	<b>3</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Fewer animals surrendered</b>	What would have happened to your animal/s if RSPCA NSW could not assist you? Surrendered to a pound or shelter, rehomed.	Multiple choice	<b>13</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>37%</b>



## VALUING OUTCOMES

The social value of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program was calculated by assigning financial proxies to represent the social value created by each outcome as experienced by that stakeholder group (Tables 5 to 8). Clients were asked during interviews to state the value of changes experienced. Clients were also asked in the questionnaire “What are the most valuable changes that have happened for you as a result of your experience with RSPCA NSW?”

**Table 5: Valuing outcomes experienced by clients of RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program**

Outcome	Proxy Description	Rationale	Value	Source
<b>Improved mental health and wellbeing</b>	Contingent valuation.  The value of a statistical life year (\$222,000) adjusted for the loss attributable to generalised anxiety disorder – mild to moderate (disability weighting 0.17). Benefit applied for the average length of time an Emergency Boarding client’s animal/s were in care (51 days).	Clients’ companion animals provide an important source of comfort and companionship that is a consistent presence in their day-to-day life. Participation in the program enables clients to preserve this relationship, which profoundly improves wellbeing and was considered the most valuable change by clients. Hence, we equate this outcome with relieving mild anxiety.	<b>\$5,320</b>	Value of a statistical life year: Australian Government, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet <sup>1</sup>  Disability weight: Australian Government, Australian Safety and Compensation Council <sup>2</sup>
<b>Extended or enhanced human-animal bond</b>	Contingent valuation.  The value of a dog life year for a companion dog with a receptive owner, applied for the difference between the average age of an Emergency Boarding program dog (5 years) and a dog’s average life expectancy (13 years) <sup>3</sup> . Based on a value of \$2,400 USD in 2019, converted to present value Australian dollars.	Clients described the depth of the bond they have with their companion animals; a bond that in many cases had been strengthened by their shared experiences of trauma. Their relationship with their companion animal was often their most valuable, even their only relationship. They also described the impact that losing this bond would have on their wellbeing.	<b>\$3,453</b>	Carlson et al, 2019 <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Australian Government. 2021. *Best Practice Regulation Guidance Note: Value of statistical life* <https://obpr.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-09/value-of-statistical-life-guidance-note-2020-08.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government. 2008. *The Health of Nations: The Value of a Statistical Life* [https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/thehealthofnations\\_valuestatisticallife\\_2008.pdf](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/thehealthofnations_valuestatisticallife_2008.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Inoue, M., Kwan, N.C. and Sugiura, K., 2018. Estimating the life expectancy of companion dogs in Japan using pet cemetery data. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Science*, pp.17-0384.

<sup>4</sup> Carlson, D., Haeder, S., Jenkins-Smith, H., Ripberger, J., Silva, C. and Weimer, D., 2019. Monetizing bowser: A contingent valuation of the statistical value of dog life. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, 11(1), pp.131-149.

Outcome	Proxy Description	Rationale	Value	Source
<b>Decreased financial stress</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The difference in cost between the emergency boarding rate charged to RSPCA NSW Community Programs clients (\$10/day) and the cost of boarding through a private pet boarding facility (\$50/day) for the average duration an Emergency Boarding client's animal/s were in care (51 days).</p>	<p>Clients experiencing this outcome avoid incurring upfront costs associated with providing safe temporary accommodation for their animals through private boarding facilities. Clients also receive discounted pet boarding through the Program. In interviews clients reported the alternative to accessing the Program would be to pay for pet boarding through a private boarding facility or veterinary hospital and that this would typically cost around \$50/day.</p>	<b>\$2,058</b>	Client interviews
<b>Increased social inclusion/decreased isolation</b>	<p>Time use method.</p> <p>The average amount spent on recreation for six months. Based on the average weekly income for a one-parent family of \$1,187, and the proportion of weekly income spent on recreation for families in the lowest income bracket (9%).</p>	<p>According to clients, participation in the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program increased their social inclusion and decreased their social isolation including increasing their sense of being supported and connected to their community and improved relationships with family and friends. Hence, we use the amount spent on recreation as a proxy to represent improved social interactions and social connectedness.</p>	<b>\$2,778</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics <sup>5</sup>
<b>Improved access to care for themselves</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The cost of an allied health assistant (\$56.16/hour) for one hour once per week for the average duration an Emergency Boarding client's animal/s were in care (51 days).</p>	<p>Clients reported in interviews and questionnaire responses that the assistance provided by RSPCA NSW enabled them to better access care and services for themselves, for example attending hospital, accessing mental health and rehabilitation services. We consider a weekly session with an allied health assistant would provide similar benefits. Allied health assistants facilitate functional improvement and provide supports aimed at adjustments, adaptation, and building capacity for clients.</p>	<b>\$413</b>	National Disability Insurance Agency <sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>ABS. 2017. *Household Expenditure Survey, Australia: Summary of Results* <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/finance/household-expenditure-survey-australia-summary-results/latest-release#income-and-spending>

<sup>6</sup>NDIA. 2022. Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits 2022-23 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/4518/download?attachment> <sup>3</sup>Inoue, M., Kwan, N.C. and Sugiura, K., 2018. Estimating the life expectancy of companion dogs in Japan using pet cemetery data. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Science*, pp.17-0384.

Outcome	Proxy Description	Rationale	Value	Source
<b>Improved physical health</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The typical cost of an annual gym membership.</p>	<p>Some clients reported experiencing improved physical health as a result of their participation in the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program. We determined that an annual gym membership would provide similar benefits to clients experiencing this outcome.</p>	<b>\$1,140</b>	Canstar Blue <sup>7</sup>
<b>Improved personal safety</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The cost of secure accommodation based on the median weekly rent for NSW 2020-21 of \$466.25 per week for the average length of time Emergency Boarding client's animal/s were in boarding or foster care (51 days).</p>	<p>Clients were better able to seek safety for themselves as a result of having somewhere safe to place their animals. In the context of people experiencing homelessness or medical or mental health crises, finding secure accommodation would be expected to provide a similar outcome for clients. Hence the median weekly rent in NSW for the duration client's animal/s were in care has been used as a proxy.</p>	<b>\$3,427</b>	NSW Government <sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Canstar. 2021. *What does the average Australian spend at the gym?* [https://www.canstarblue.com.au/health-beauty/average-gym-cost/#:~:text=Aussies%20spend%20an%20average%20of,lowest%20gym%20costs%20\(%2454\)](https://www.canstarblue.com.au/health-beauty/average-gym-cost/#:~:text=Aussies%20spend%20an%20average%20of,lowest%20gym%20costs%20(%2454).). <sup>8</sup>NDIA. 2022. Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits 2022-23 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/4518/download?attachment>

<sup>8</sup> NSW Government. 2021. *Rent Report* [https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/facs.statistics/viz/Rentandsales\\_15565127794310/Rent](https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/facs.statistics/viz/Rentandsales_15565127794310/Rent)



**Table 6:** Valuing outcomes experienced by the animal/s of RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding clients

Outcome	Proxy Description	Rationale	Value	Source
<b>Improved wellbeing as a result of preserving or improving the human-animal bond</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The cost of insurance premiums for a typical RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program animal (5-year-old Australian Cattle Dog Cross).</p>	<p>We have chosen the cost of insurance to reflect the value placed on ensuring an animal's continued wellbeing by their owner. We consider this to be an outcome that continues for the life of the animal. In addition, this is a relationship that strengthens over time, increasing rather than decreasing as animals age.</p>	<b>\$1,380</b>	Choosi: Pet Insurance. Pet insurance comparison website <sup>9</sup>
<b>Access to safe accommodation</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The cost of private pet boarding for the average number of days an RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program animal remained in care (39 days).</p>	<p>RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program clients' animals access safe accommodation either in secure boarding facilities or with foster families. Accessing private pet boarding would provide a similar outcome for these animals hence the cost of private boarding has been used as a proxy. Clients reported in interviews that this would cost around \$50 per day through local boarding kennels or veterinary practices.</p>	<b>\$1,925</b>	Client interviews
<b>Improved physical health</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The average cost of veterinary treatment per animal that received veterinary treatment while under the care of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program.</p>	<p>Most animals participating in the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program accessed veterinary treatment, whether routine medical care or treatment or injuries or illness and as a result experienced improved physical health. Hence, the average cost of the veterinary treatment provided per animal receiving veterinary treatment through the program was used as the proxy for this outcome.</p>	<b>\$241</b>	RSPCA NSW Community Programs records

<sup>9</sup>Choosi. 2022. Compare pet insurance <https://www.choosi.com.au/pet-insurance>

**Table 7:** Valuing outcomes experienced by the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate because of RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program

Outcome	Proxy Description	Rationale	Value	Source
<p><b>More time available to pursue genuine animal cruelty offences</b></p>	<p>Time use method.</p> <p>Value of an Inspector's time spent pursuing RSPCA NSW Emergency Boarding Programs cases as cruelty or abandonment cases, based on the average hourly rate for Inspectors of \$35/hr, assuming 3hrs per week in total are spent assisting potential RSPCA NSW Community Programs cases, 50% of which are likely to be related to the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program.</p>	<p>In stakeholder interviews, RSPCA NSW Inspectors described taking animals from situations that would ideally be managed by a case worker into protective custody under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 as the only alternative to keep animals safe where cases cannot be referred to the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program. This requires a considerable investment of time and resources that could otherwise be used by the RSPCA NSW Inspectorate to pursue genuine cruelty cases. Hence, we use the value to the Inspectors of getting this time back as a proxy for this outcome.</p>	<p><b>\$2,730</b></p>	<p>Inspector interviews</p>
<p><b>Improved mental health</b></p>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>The cost of a typical mental health plan of six sessions with a psychologist at \$210 per session.</p>	<p>RSPCA NSW Inspectors described being relieved of substantial moral distress when they can refer clients to the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program. Without this referral pathway, Inspectors' mental health can be negatively affected. We consider this moral distress comparable with mild anxiety and hence value this outcome using a typical treatment plan for mild anxiety.</p>	<p><b>\$1,260</b></p>	<p>Australian Psychological Society<sup>10</sup></p>

<sup>10</sup>APS. 2018. APS National Schedule of Recommended Fees. <https://psychology.org.au/getmedia/af30b47d-ef39-49c2-8116-6d20ed1dc828/18aps-2018-19-aps-is-srf-p1-a.pdf>

**Table 8:** Valuing outcomes experienced by animal pounds and shelters because of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program

Outcome	Proxy Description	Rationale	Value	Source
<b>Fewer animals abandoned without care</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>Cost to RSPCA NSW of processing an abandoned animal.</p>	<p>According to interviews with RSPCA NSW Inspectors, animals regularly come into the care of RSPCA NSW Shelters via the Inspectorate because of being abandoned without care. This was also mentioned in interviews with RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding clients. Costs are incurred by RSPCA NSW for retrieving, sheltering and rehabilitating these animals. Hence, the average costs associated with rehabilitating a typical RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding client's animal (a medium sized adult dog) has been used as the proxy for this outcome.</p>	<b>\$885</b>	RSPCA NSW records
<b>Fewer animals surrendered by their owner</b>	<p>Observed spending on related goods.</p> <p>Cost to RSPCA NSW of processing a surrendered animal.</p>	<p>When asked 'What do you think would be different for you now if you had not accessed assistance for your animal/s through RSPCA NSW?', some RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding clients responded that their animal would have been surrendered to a pound or shelter. Hence the average cost to RSPCA NSW of processing a surrendered animal from the time of surrender to adoption has been used as a proxy for this outcome.</p>	<b>\$686</b>	RSPCA NSW records



# APPENDIX 2

## INPUTS

The cost of inputs for the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program in financial year 2020-21 was determined through interviews with RSPCA NSW Community Programs staff and examination of program financial records. Values are based on actual costs for the 2020-2021 financial year (Table 9). Where products and services have been donated or discounted the full market value has been used in the calculation of the SROI.

**Table 9:** Input costs for the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program financial year 2020-21

Investment	Value
People costs	<b>\$226,425</b>
Non-people costs	<b>\$81,185</b>
Animal food	<b>\$4,637</b>
Volunteers	<b>\$38,996</b>
Veterinary treatment	<b>\$64,148</b>
Animal boarding	<b>\$80,998</b>
Foster Care	<b>\$146,100</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$642,489</b>

**Table 10:** Net social value of outcomes experienced by stakeholders of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program.

Stakeholder (n)	Outcome	Financial Proxy	Outcome Incidence	Deadweight	Attribution	Displacement	Benefit Period (years)	Drop-Off	Net Social Value <sup>11</sup>
Clients (259)	Improved mental health and wellbeing	\$5,320	90%	7%	50%	0%	1	N/A	\$574,429
	Extended or enhanced human-animal bond	\$3,453	93%	7%	0%	25%	8	5%	\$1,554,223
	Improved access to care for themselves	\$413	59%	7%	50%	0%	1	N/A	\$29,143
	Decreased financial stress	\$2,058	76%	7%	0%	0%	1	N/A	\$376,068
	Improved personal safety	\$3,427	41%	7%	75%	0%	1	N/A	\$85,394
	Increased social inclusion/ decreased isolation	\$2,778	72%	7%	50%	0%	1	N/A	\$242,274
	Improved physical health	\$1,140	38%	7%	75%	0%	1	N/A	\$26,039

<sup>11</sup> To be conservative when claiming, the net present value of outcomes with a benefit period of nine years has only included the value of these outcomes for the first three years.

**Table 10:** Net social value of outcomes experienced by stakeholders of the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program.

Stakeholder (n)	Outcome	Financial Proxy	Outcome Incidence	Deadweight	Attribution	Displacement	Benefit Period (years)	Drop-Off	Net Social Value <sup>11</sup>
Client's animal/s (627)	Improved wellbeing as a result of preserving or improving the human-animal bond	\$1,380	91%	25%	0%	25%	8	0%	\$1,249,542
	Access to safe accommodation	\$1,925	71%	7%	0%	0%	1	N/A	\$801,776
	Improved physical health	\$241	71%	7%	0%	0%	1	N/A	\$100,315
RSPCA Inspectorate (35)	More time available to pursue genuine animal cruelty offenses	\$2,730	80%	7%	0%	0%	1	N/A	\$71,089
	Improved mental health	\$1,260	80%	7%	0%	0%	1	N/A	\$32,810
Animal pounds and shelters	Fewer animals abandoned without care (54 animals; 9% of clients reported their animal would have been abandoned without care)	\$885	100%	7%	0%	0%	1	N/A	\$44,246
	Improved physical health	\$686	100%	25%	25%	0%	1	N/A	\$89,832

<sup>11</sup> To be conservative when claiming, the net present value of outcomes with a benefit period of nine years has only included the value of these outcomes for the first three years.



**Table 11:** The social return on investment on the RSPCA NSW Homelessness and Emergency Boarding Program for financial year 2020-21

<b>Total social value created for all stakeholders</b>	<b>\$5,277,179</b>
<b>Net Program Investment</b>	<b>\$642,489</b>
<b>Social return for each \$1 invested</b>	<b>\$8.21</b>