



GETTING 2 ZERO SUBMISSION

Renewal of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Consultation

Getting to Zero (G2Z) is a national program providing free, remote, and onsite, consulting and support services for local government, not-for-profit organisations, and community groups to improve outcomes for lost/stray and homeless animals, and their caretakers, in every community in Australia.

G2Z works closely with governments, animal welfare organisations and researchers and has specific and practical knowledge on companion animal management and sheltering.

G2Z STRONGLY SUPPORTS the renewal of the AAWS.

For over a decade, Australia has lacked a national direction regarding animal welfare. Therefore, the development of a new Animal Welfare Strategy offers a significant opportunity to ensure a future-ready, contemporary animal welfare system that benefits both people and animals. This process is of utmost importance and should be conducted with ample resources and a committed focus on improving animal welfare.

It is paramount for Australian governments to set an ambitious agenda to compensate for the last decade's inaction and the lapse of the previous strategy. The lack of forums for stakeholders to address key issues has led to a breakdown in relationships and lack of collaboration and cooperation. Most importantly, the absence of national leadership and coordinated strategy, has resulted in a lack of progression and denied billions of animals the opportunity for improved welfare standards.

It is extremely concerning to see that it may take another three years before the AAWS is renewed. The proposed timeline, extending to 2027, is unnecessarily protracted. We



recommend that the various chapters should be developed concurrently, given the likely overlap and common issues. We strongly urge the Australian Government to allocate additional funding to expedite the renewal process of the AAWS.

G2Z welcomes the opportunity to engage at any level on the topic of domestic animal welfare and management.

Question 1. Does this vision statement reflect everything you feel an Australian Animal Welfare Strategy should aim to achieve?

It is our view that the vision of the 2008 version of AAWS is superior to that proposed in the Discussion Paper - it aimed to promote and protect the welfare of all animals in Australia through the development and adoption of sound animal welfare standards and practices.

The last version of AAWS (2010-14) presented a comprehensive series of goals, objectives, outcomes, benefits, and indicators of success that could inform the renewed strategy. A renewed AAWS should leverage these existing foundations, informed by modern science and community expectations. To start all over again will waste time and resources.

The vision for the AAWS should outline the future that the strategy seeks to build. The proposed vision reads more like a mission statement, focusing on what the AAWS intends to do, rather than setting out a vision for the future.

Question 2. Do the proposed streams cover the right priority areas for the strategy?

It is our view that all the proposed work streams are integral to the successful functioning of the AAWS.

Question 3. Are there any shared factors affecting animal welfare that cut across all, or multiple, animal groups? For example: Climate change, innovation, workforce retention.

Public attitudes, values and beliefs about animals are driven by social factors and social change that will inevitably impact all animal sectors. The AAWS should monitor these trends to ensure Australia's approach to animal welfare aligns with public values and expectations. This will also aid animal-based industries in making necessary adjustments to promote their sustainability.



Biosecurity is another crucial factor that could affect all animals, both directly through a biosecurity incursion and indirectly through prevention and response strategies. Animal welfare must be incorporated into these strategies, informed by independent and expert advice.

Climate change affects all animal life. Developing strategies to mitigate the direct effects of climate change on animals is essential for all animal sectors. Animal welfare must also be considered in broader societal climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Questions 4 & 5. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing Australia's animal welfare system?

The most significant challenges facing Australia's animal welfare system is the lack of independent governance and appropriate levels of resourcing. The current delegation of oversight to ministries and departments of agriculture is problematic due to conflicting priorities.

A significant challenge for Australia's animal welfare system is the disparity between public expectations regarding animal welfare governance and the reality of the current systems.

Questions 6 & 7. What do you think are the biggest opportunities for Australia's animal welfare system?

Establishing a national Animal Welfare Commission could effectively address the main challenges of the current animal welfare system. This would offer benefits such as streamlining national animal welfare standards reviews, increasing community engagement, addressing neglected areas of animal welfare and management, promoting science-based policies, and improving trust and confidence in the system.

In the absence of a national Animal Welfare Commission, the AAWS must build independence and transparency into its governance arrangements and processes. This can be achieved by establishing an independent, expert-based advisory council to oversee the strategy's implementation and by publicly reporting on activities and implementation progress.

