



ACT election 2024—Key animal protection issues

The Animal Defenders Office (“ADO”) is seeking your views on key animal welfare issues in the ACT.

We are contacting all political parties and independents about these issues, so we can inform the public about where each party or candidate stands.

We know parties and candidates have very little time in the lead-up to an election, so we are happy to receive a ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘undecided’ response.

1. Moratorium on kangaroo killing on public land and nature reserves

For several years the ACT Government has killed thousands of healthy kangaroos in ACT nature reserves and on other public land. The ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal has accepted that the culls have serious negative animal welfare outcomes, particularly for the hundreds of orphaned joeys who die a slow death after being separated from their mother (whose milk is their primary source of food).¹ A moratorium to evaluate the culls would be consistent with the *Nature Conservation (Eastern Grey Kangaroo) Controlled Native Species Management Plan 2017*.² In 2022 the ADO called for an inquiry into the culls by the ACT Legislative Assembly’s Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity, as a truly independent inquiry in which all members of the community could participate. Similar inquiries have been and will be held in NSW and SA.³ The ACT Committee refused to establish such an inquiry.



Question 1: Would you support a moratorium on killing kangaroos on public land while the culls are evaluated in an independent and transparent forum such as an Assembly Committee inquiry?

Yes No Undecided

2. Maintain the ban on greyhound racing in the ACT

It is widely acknowledged that the animal welfare issues associated with greyhound racing are inherent in the industry, including wastage and racing injuries and deaths.⁴ The activity is banned in 43 States in the US, with only two active racetracks in the whole country and both in a single State.⁵ Industry participants in Australia state that they love their dogs, but no amount of love can negate the serious animal welfare concerns inherent in the activity. This is why the legislative ban on greyhound racing in the ACT must be maintained.⁶



Question 2: Do you support maintaining the ACT’s nation-leading legislative ban on greyhound racing in the ACT?

Yes No Undecided

¹ *Animal Liberation ACT v Conservator of Flora and Fauna* [2014] ACAT 35.

² <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2017-37/>.

³ *Health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales*, NSW Legislative Council, Planning and Environment Committee, Government Response 12/4/2022; and *Kangaroo and Wallaby populations in South Australia*, SA Legislative Council, Natural Resources Committee, agreed 12/9/2024.

⁴ RSPCA Australia, ‘There are numerous animal welfare issues inherent to greyhound racing’, 2024, <https://www.rspca.org.au/key-issues/greyhound-racing/>.

⁵ <https://www.grey2kusa.org/about/states.php>.

⁶ *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (ACT), s 18A.

3. Inquiry into the seizure and impoundment of dogs by the Domestic Animal Services

The ADO is run by volunteers and receives no government funding. Yet a disproportionately large part of our scarce resources is taken up by representing ACT residents whose dogs have been seized and impounded by the Domestic Animal Services (“DAS”). Our clients tell the same story about their ordeals, experiencing high levels of anxiety due to poor customer service, no communication, and a lack of empathy for their concern about the fate of their companion animal. This results in protracted proceedings in the local Tribunal while the dogs are confined in the pound. Often DAS’s decisions are overturned, demonstrating the need for independent scrutiny.⁷ The lives of the keepers and their dogs are irrevocably impacted by their ordeal. An inquiry (eg by a committee of the Legislative Assembly) into DAS’s operations to give this traumatised section of the community and their animals a voice and to improve this critical government service is long overdue.



Question 3: Would you support an inquiry into the seizure and impoundment of dogs by DAS?

Yes No Undecided

4. Phase out 1080 poison in the ACT

1080 (‘sodium fluoroacetate’) is a highly toxic poison used on vertebrate animals in Australia. The toxin is known to kill native species and companion animals (pictured), both from direct and secondary ingestion. According to the RSPCA, 1080 ‘is not a humane poison’.⁸ It is classed by the World Health Organisation as an Extremely Hazardous pesticide (Class 1a WHO).⁹ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recommends ending its use.¹⁰



The use of inhumane 1080 poison on sentient animals in the ACT is currently legal. This is out-of-step with the ACT’s nation-leading reforms on animal welfare, and the use of 1080 in the ACT should be prohibited under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (ACT).

Question 4: Would you support phasing out 1080 as an animal poison in the ACT?

Yes No Undecided

5. Phase out school chick hatching projects in the ACT

A chick hatching program is where a school is delivered fertile eggs which hatch after arrival. The live chickens are confined at the school for up to two weeks then collected by the supplier. Hatching projects are acknowledged around the world as having serious animal welfare concerns for the young and vulnerable animals involved and the roosters who make



⁷ See for example [Oliver v Registrar, Domestic Animals Act 2000 \(Appeal\) \[2021\] ACAT 93](#), [Goward v Registrar, Domestic Animals Act 2000 \(Administrative Review\) \[2022\] ACAT 75](#), [Pye v The Registrar, Domestic Animals Act 2000](#) [unreported, 10 May 2022], [Harriden v Registrar Domestic Animals Act 2000](#) [unreported, 31 August 2022], [Reid v Registrar, Domestic Animals Act 2000 \[2023\] ACAT 14](#), [McInnis v Registrar Domestic Animals Act 2000](#) [unreported, 11 December 2023]. These cases do not include cases settled at mediation.

⁸ RSPCA Australia, 7 June 2021, <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-the-rspcas-view-on-using-1080-for-pest-animal-control/>.

⁹ World Health Organisation (WHO), ‘The WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard’ (2019) https://www.who.int/ipcs/publications/pesticides_hazard/en/.

¹⁰ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), ‘International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management. Guidelines on Highly Hazardous Pesticides’ (2016), <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5566e.pdf>.

up 50% of the animals born as part of the programs.¹¹ Any educational value the programs may once have been thought to have in pre-digital eras is not justifiable by contemporary animal welfare standards. These outmoded programs should be phased out under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (ACT).

Question 5: Would you support phasing out the use of hatching projects in schools in the ACT?

Yes No Undecided

6. Phase out government subsidy for horseracing in the ACT

There are serious animal welfare concerns with horse racing, including oversupply and wastage, use of painful devices, and substantial risk of injury and premature death.¹² The ACT's racetrack is consistently rated as the most lethal track in Australia.¹³ It is not a 'sport' that the ACT Government should be subsidising with approximately \$40 million of public money¹⁴, and certainly not at the expense of funding other sports that do not involve animal cruelty. The next ACT Government must commit to phasing out financial support for this industry by not renewing the Memorandum of Understanding between the Territory and the Canberra Racing Clubs.¹⁵



Question 6: Would you support phasing out the use of public money to subsidise the horse racing industry?

Yes No Undecided

Thank you for responding to our questions.

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About the Animal Defenders Office Inc.

The Animal Defenders Office (ADO) is a nationally accredited community legal centre based in the ACT. We specialise in public interest animal law. We aim to support, empower and advocate for individuals and groups who want to use the law to protect animals, and to do this through the provision of information, advocacy and advice. For further information about the issues raised in this document, please email us at contact@ado.org.au. To learn more about the ADO please visit our website: www.ado.org.au

¹¹ RSPCA Australia: <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-chick-hatching-in-schools/>; Animal Kind (UK): <http://animalkind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/AA-Hatching-Worksheet.pdf>; United Poultry Concerns (USA): <https://www.upc-online.org/hatching/>.

¹² RSPCA Australia, 'There are serious animal welfare issues with horse racing, spanning the entire lifecycle of the horses involved', <https://www.rspca.org.au/key-issues/horse-racing/>.

¹³ <https://horseracingkills.com/issues/deathwatch/>.

¹⁴ ACT Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Capital Territory and the Canberra Racing Club and Canberra Harness Racing Club 2022-2027, clause 5.1, https://www.justice.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2283681/Memorandum-of-Understanding--2-May-2023.pdf.

¹⁵ https://www.justice.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2283681/Memorandum-of-Understanding--2-May-2023.pdf.