



ACT

Volunteer Orientation Handbook



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Welcome

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with RSPCA ACT. Volunteers are valued and vital members of the RSPCA ACT team. Without our committed volunteers, RSPCA ACT would not be able to provide a future for so many thousands of animals each year.

We hope that you will find your volunteering experience with us rewarding and enjoyable. Welcome to the RSPCA ACT team!



About the RSPCA

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the RSPCA, is a community based charity which works to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection.

RSPCA Australia is a Federation of eight independent State and Territory RSPCA bodies called member Societies. These include New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and ACT. RSPCA member Societies do much of the hands-on work traditionally associated with the RSPCA such as the operation of shelters and the Inspectorate as well as community education and fundraising.

RSPCA Australia was founded in 1981 and establishes national policies and positions on animal welfare issues, as well as working with government and industry to ensure these issues are addressed. RSPCA Australia is located at Deakin in the ACT and RSPCA ACT has a close relationship with the RSPCA Australia office.

Every state and territory society belongs to RSPCA Australia. However, each branch operates autonomously and is subject to its own State Laws, including:

- Domestic Animals Act 2000
- Animal Welfare Act 1992
- Various ACT Codes of Practice



RSPCA ACT

RSPCA ACT was formed in 1955 and offers a range of services to the Canberra community and surrounding region. RSPCA ACT is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by a CEO. Under the CEO sit a number of departments and within these departments sit sections and operational programs.

What do we do?

- Care for over 4,000 animals every year at our shelter
- Investigate animal cruelty
- Pet adoptions
- Public dog and puppy training school
- Retail store open six days a week
- Five-Star Cat Boarding Facility - Tango's Place

RSPCA ACT Board

A Board of volunteers drawn from the community are appointed at the Annual General Meeting to oversee the governance of RSPCA ACT and to formulate policy. The CEO reports to the Board and is responsible for the day to day running of the organisation.

The Board is responsible for all activities involving:

- Overall governance of RSPCA ACT
- Developing an overall mission for the RSPCA ACT
- Setting long term corporate policy
- Ensuring long term planning
- Reviewing and approving large scale capital expenditure
- Participating and directing corporate policy

Board Meetings

The Board conduct monthly meetings to discuss a range of issues pertaining to animal welfare strategy, governance, policy development and performance review. Board meetings are attended by the CEO, and all relevant communications are forwarded to appropriate management and staff.

The Five Freedoms

At RSPCA ACT, we all believe in the 'Five Freedoms' for animals

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom from pain, injury or disease** by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom to express normal behaviour** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

RSPCA Values

All RSPCA ACT employees and volunteers share the same values. These values govern how we operate with animals, each other, our supporters, our customers and the general public. They are:

- Compassion
- Integrity
- Respect
- Act Responsibly
- Unity
- Professionalism
- Enthusiasm
- Continuous Improvement

These values underpin everything we do here at **RSPCA ACT** and must be embraced by every member of staff and every volunteer.

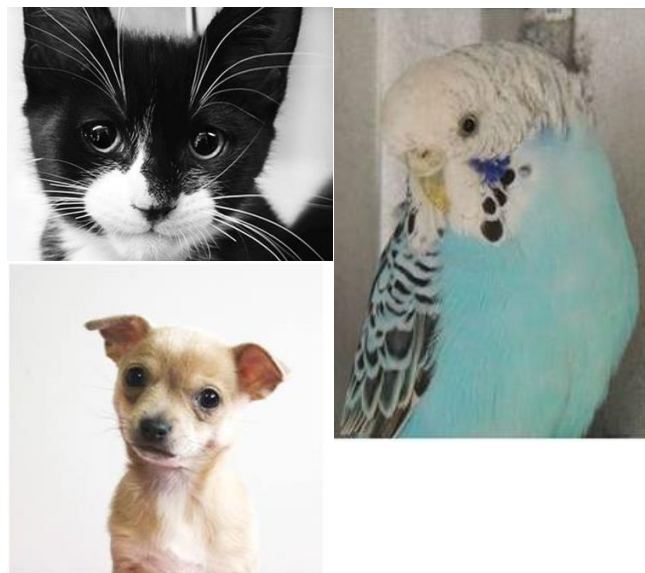
Departments and Sections

Animal Shelter

The shelter acts as a rehabilitation and adoption centre for unwanted, stray and injured animals and as a holding facility for animals which are the subject of pending legal action by RSPCA Inspectors. The number of animals in the shelter at one time varies enormously and is usually much larger during the warmer months.

The shelter comprises:

- dog kennels
- whelping area
- cattery
- rabbit houses
- other small animal enclosures
- yards for dogs to exercise
- training yards for dog training school
- quarantine area for sick animals
- meet and greet yards
- bird aviaries
- Tango's Place (cat boarding facility)
- veterinary clinic.



Kennels & Behavioural Modification

We house up to 50 dogs and puppies at any given time.

Behavioural trainers work with dogs and puppies at the shelter using positive reinforcement techniques to increase mental wellbeing and adoptability. Our behavioural modification program is crucial to RSPCA ACT successfully homing dogs and includes the care and assessment of dogs and puppies while they are at the shelter. Animal Care Assistants in the kennels area assist with putting in place behavioural modification programs using positive reinforcement techniques. The area liaises closely with the vet clinic to ensure the physical health of dogs is also maximised.

The Executive Manager of Animal Welfare is responsible for the behavioural modification program and is supported by the Animal Care Manager, Senior Behavioural Trainer and animal care assistants.

Cattery and Pocket Pets

Our cattery houses up to 40 unwanted, stray and injured cats and kittens. During kitten season, generally between October and June, over 1000 kittens can come through the shelter; around four to seven litters a week! This means that our network of over 100 cat/kitten foster carers are vital in assisting us to provide care for young kittens and pregnant mums.

We refer to the small animals in our care as pocket pets. These include rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, mice and rats. Many of these animals come to the shelter as strays, or surrenders.

Domestics

The domestics area looks after poultry, parrots, reptiles, farm animals and other animals. Many of these animals come to the shelter through our Inspectorate services.

Pet Adoption Centre (PAC)

First Impressions count. The PAC is the first place people see when they visit RSPCA ACT. PAC manages our retail sales, lost and found enquiries, training school, cat boarding facility (Tango's Place), Kids n Kritters school holiday program, general enquiries. PAC also process all outgoing animal adoptions or collections, and process all incoming animals into the shelter.

The PAC is managed by the Customer Service Manager and is supported by a team leader and a team of animal care assistants. The area acts as a conduit for all other activities of the RSPCA ACT. On average, approximately 600 people per week visit the PAC and PAC staff members also handle many of the over 1,500 phone calls weekly which come through our Call Centre, located in the Tango's Place building.

Volunteers in the PAC help us to distribute donated items around the shelter, unpack stock, and assist with general cleaning and tidying of the customer facing areas.

Training School

Our classes focus on giving owners and dogs the skills to live in harmony together. We specialise in pet dog training, teaching basic manners and behaviour management. Skills such as sitting for pats, not jumping up, self-control, being able to settle on a mat or by your feet, coming when called, and walking nicely on the lead are just some of the exercises taught.

Solutions to prevent or stop general destructiveness such as chewing and digging, becoming recreational barkers and other common behaviour problems are addressed. Handling and gentling activities which teach dogs to accept experiences such as veterinary examinations, nail clipping, brushing and hands reaching to hold them are also an integral part of the program. Our training classes also include socialising activities and learning the important skill of greeting other dogs on lead.

Kids n Kritters

Kids n Kritters is RSPCA ACT's school holiday program for children aged 7 – 13 years. The program consists of a series of fun, interactive education sessions run over the school holidays for youngsters who are interested in learning more about animals.

Tango's Place

Tango's Place is a five-star boarding facility for pet cats when their owners are away. Tango's provides a temperature controlled, safe and welcoming environment with plenty of space to play, relax and exercise.

Our Call Centre is also located in the Tango's building; with staff members handling incoming calls from this location whilst spending time socialising the animals in our care.

Vet Clinic

The RSPCA ACT Veterinary Clinic is currently closed to the public so we can focus on providing veterinary services to shelter animals and other animals in need. We also provide a desexing service to Domestic Animals Services ACT and the Cooma RSPCA.

All dogs, cats, ferrets and rabbits are desexed, wormed, vaccinated and microchipped prior to adoption. Rodents, birds and guinea pigs are not desexed, but are wormed and vaccinated where appropriate.

The shelter operations of the Vet Clinic are managed by the Executive Manager of Animal Welfare. Staff in the Vet Clinic comprises veterinarians and vet nurses.

Volunteers in the Vet Clinic comprise of vet nurses (usually studying) and veterinarians.

Inspectorate

RSPCA ACT runs an Inspectorate service to ensure compliance with *The Animal Welfare Act 1992* in the community. This Act gives RSPCA Inspectors the power, when necessary, to enter premises, seize an animal and lay charges on a person.

RSPCA Inspectors wear a distinctive navy and tan uniform and have photographic identification.

Animal welfare laws in the ACT assert that all animals must be provided with:

- food
- water
- shelter
- exercise
- veterinary attention if required

Failure to provide these can result in prosecution. Animal cruelty is a crime. Animal Welfare Offences can result in prosecution in the court and, if found guilty, a criminal conviction would be recorded. A fine of up to \$10,000 and/or one year in jail or \$20,000 and/or two years in jail for deliberate acts of cruelty can be brought against a person.

Administration

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Our CEO has management responsibility and oversight of the day to day business of the RSPCA ACT. The CEO is directly supported by an Executive Assistant/Communications Officer, and the overall Management Team.

Support Services

This area runs all of the administrative functions of a typical business. It includes our human resource support area, volunteer coordination, information technology and telephones, payroll, stores and stationery control, work health and safety and corporate learning and development. This area is also responsible for the overall maintenance of the RSPCA ACT Shelter, including cleaning, security, facilities management and fleet management. Staff in this area play a crucial role in supporting all of the functions of the animal shelter. This area is managed by the Executive Manager of Support Services, who is supported by the Volunteers' Manager, Learning and Development Coordinator, Maintenance Officer and Assistant and Administration Officer.

Finance

The finance team consists of a Finance Manager and Finance Assistant. The finance team handle:

- the Annual Budget
- audit coordination
- accounts receivable & payable
- banking and processing all incoming monies
- preparation of weekly cash flow statements
- provision of monthly statements of income and expenditure, cash flow, balance sheets, investment reports to CEO
- liaising with ATO and preparing monthly BAS reports

Fundraising and Marketing

Fundraising and Marketing is responsible for supporting our animal welfare activities. Without one, the other cannot possibly function. This area is managed by the Marketing Manager, who is supported by the Marketing Designer, Marketing Assistant, Fundraising Officer and Assistant.

Fundraising and Marketing are in charge of managing all events, donations, appeals, fundraising campaigns, sponsorships and other income generating activities. The team is also heavily involved in marketing the Shelter's commercial services to the broader community. These services include dog training, cat boarding, Kids and Kritters and special animal promotions.

Volunteers also provide support to this area by assisting with general administration tasks as well as high levels of assistance at our Major Events.



Volunteer Roles

Volunteers provide invaluable assistance in many different areas and are an indispensable part of our organisation.

Volunteers work with RSPCA ACT between 8:30 am and 4 pm every day of the week, including weekends and public holidays.

- **Kennels** - Volunteers assist with cleaning the kennels area, walking the dogs, feeding and sitting with the dogs.
- **Cattery and Pocket Pets** - Volunteers assist with cleaning, laundry, feeding and socialising the cats and kittens, bunnies and other small animals such as rats, guinea pigs and ferrets.
- **Domestics** - Volunteers assist with cleaning, changing straw and water and preparing food for fowl, parrots, ducks and other animals.
- **Events** - RSPCA ACT has a wide range of events which we run over the year including Million Paws Walk and Cupcake Day. We are always looking for volunteers to get involved in the lead up to events as well as at the events themselves.

- **Pet Adoption Centre** – Volunteers assist with the general running of the Pet Adoption Centre (PAC) by distributing donated items around the shelter, unpacking stock and assisting with general cleaning and tidying of the customer facing areas.
- **Dog training school assistants** – Dog training school assistants help our training instructors to deliver high quality positive motivational training programs to members of the ACT community.
- **Tangos Place** – Volunteers assist with cleaning, laundry, feeding and socialising of cats and kittens in care in the boarding facility.
- **Vet Clinic** – Volunteer vets and vet nurses donate their time to our vet clinic and support our staff to treat and assist animals in need.
- **Gardening and Maintenance** - Volunteers assist with gardening, cleaning and a wide range of maintenance tasks around the shelter.
- **Administration** - Volunteers help out with an array of administrative tasks including putting together information packs, data entry, mail-outs and assisting with research and other projects.
- **Kids n Kritters** – Volunteers provide assistance to the facilitator of the program. Tasks may include craft activities, patting the animals, excursions around the shelter.
- **Foster Care** – Volunteers at RSPCA are engaged to provide foster homes for cats, kittens, dogs and puppies. Foster carers are always required, but are especially vital during kitten season (generally between October and June).



Facilities

- **Toilets** - there are toilets located in the Pet Adoption Centre, Kennels, Vet Clinic, Domestic Building and Administration Building
- **Shower**- a shower is located in the Kennels utility building
- **Smoking** – RSPCA ACT is a **non-smoking facility**.

Site Access

- **Public Opening Hours:** 9am – 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. 10am – 5pm Wednesday.
- **Closed:** Public Holidays and Sundays

When arriving for shifts before 9 am, enter through the side gate near the Vet Clinic which is open by 8:30 at the latest every day. The side gate is locked at 11 am every day. On Sunday a combination lock is placed on the gate. Sunday volunteers will be given the code.

Signing In and Out

Please ensure that you always sign in and out when you come in to volunteer. Sign in before your shift and out as you leave, do not sign both entries as you leave. Signing in when you arrive ensures that we know who is on site in the case of an emergency. The sign in/out sheets are located in the hallway behind the reception desk in PAC.

Attendance

If you are unable to attend your shift, send an email to the Volunteers' Manager (volunteers@rspca-act.org.au), even if it is short notice. This applies to weekends and public holidays as well as weekdays. The more notice you can give the better, so if possible please advise the Volunteers' Manager of your leave with as much notice as you can provide.

Parking

RSPCA volunteers may park along Kirkpatrick Street at no cost. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to park in the Pet Adoption Centre car park as it is reserved for RSPCA ACT customers.

Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment

Green volunteer polo shirts and name badges are provided to all volunteers upon commencement and must be worn on all shifts. Long trousers of sturdy material (jeans are fine) must be worn at all times in all weather. Also, be mindful that as you'll be working with animals anything you wear is quite likely to get dirty. Closed toed shoes are also to be worn at all times. It is worth wearing water proof shoes if possible, particularly for cleaning roles and any role in the domestics area. The RSPCA ACT have some wet weather equipment, such as gumboots and rain coats available for use by volunteers in the kennels and domestics areas.

RSPCA ACT provide ear plugs for volunteers who work in kennels cleaner roles. These should be worn at all times to reduce the risk of damage to hearing.

Please be aware of sun safety, and wear a broad-brimmed hat and sunscreen for any roles which involve being outside. Gloves, face masks and protective glasses can be provided by staff members if required. This kind of equipment is generally not essential for volunteers, but is always available.

Volunteer Commitment

We ask that volunteers commit to volunteering with us for a minimum **6 month period**. This is due to the fact that much time, energy and resources are involved in engaging and training volunteers.

If your circumstances change and you need to cease volunteering within this period we won't hold you to this commitment, but please consider carefully whether you believe you'll be able to commit prior to commencing your volunteer training.

Training

Position Description and task analysis information

Volunteer position description and task analysis information can be found on our website and outlines basic information about each volunteer role.

Please also ensure you have read the task analysis information applicable to your role and that you are able to safely perform the associated tasks.

For animal based roles, you will also need to declare that you can meet the 'RSPCA ACT Essential Capabilities of Volunteers in Animals Based Roles'. This document can also be found on our website.

Volunteer Induction

All volunteers are required to complete a general online volunteer induction program which covers non-role specific information relevant to every volunteer, including information about the RSPCA and its policies, procedures and rules.

Practical Training

Applicants working with animals will be required to complete role specific practical training following the completion of their online induction, as outlined below:

- Kennels: Level one module training, depending on the area of interest:
 - Walking – 2x 2hour sessions;
 - Sitting – 1x 2 hour session;
 - Cleaning – 1x 2 hour session.
- Cattery/Pocket Pets: 1 x 2 hour session;
- Domestic: 1 x 2 hour session.

Following the completion of relevant modules, applicants may then be required to buddy with an existing volunteer for a few shifts prior to being placed into a regular volunteer role. The assessment of this requirement will be made by the relevant RSPCA ACT Trainer.

Interacting with the Public

If you are approached by a member of the public who has questions while you are volunteering, refer them on to staff. If you are asked about a specific animal, for example a dog you're walking, tell them that it's a lovely dog, and that for further information they will need to speak to a staff member.

Volunteers are not to remove animals from cages or kennels for customers. Volunteers must refer customers to staff members, or where appropriate level two trained volunteers, for assistance.

Social Media Use

RSPCA ACT has a strict Social Media policy which is applicable to all volunteers and staff. Please take the time to read this and familiarise yourself with the rules surrounding social media use for staff and volunteers.

Some of the most important points to remember are listed below. Please do not:

- post photos or videos of any kind taken at the shelter or at RSPCA ACT events on your personal social media accounts;
- post photos of your foster animals on your personal social media if you are fostering shelter animals;
- post messages, photos or videos, or make or respond to comments on behalf of RSPCA ACT on Facebook;
- include RSPCA ACT logos or trademarks on posts.

Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment

RSPCA ACT aims to provide an environment free of all forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment.

- Bullying can be defined as the repeated victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening behaviour by an individual or group.
- Discrimination involves treating someone unfairly because of a personal attribute – gender, race, disability, illness.
- Sexual harassment can involve unwanted touching, propositions, inappropriate telephone calls, persistent requests for dates or staring.

You do not have to endure any form of bullying, discrimination or harassment from the public or staff - speak to your manager or the Volunteers' Manager if you feel at all uncomfortable or victimised.

Euthanasia

One of the hardest parts of shelter life is the exposure to animals being euthanised. The decision to euthanise an animal is never taken lightly, and there is always a number of staff involved in the decision.

Reasons for Euthanising Animals:

- **Medical conditions that affect the quality of life**
- **Behavioural problems that can make the animal a danger to persons or other animals**

While there is no time limit on the amount of time an animal can stay, unfortunately, the longer an animal is kept at the shelter the more likely it is to mentally deteriorate. Ultimately, if an animal is mentally or physically unable to be rehomed (or released, in the case of wildlife) it will be euthanised.

It is important as a volunteer to be as prepared as possible for this potential reality. Counselling services are available to any volunteer if required.

Counselling Service

RSPCA's Employee Assistance Program provider, Converge International, offers a counselling service for all staff and volunteers.

- Free
- Completely confidential

You are able to speak to someone on the phone, via the internet or face to face. You can contact Converge International on 1800 337 068 or via the website: www.convergeinternational.com.au

Work Safety

The majority of our volunteer roles involve physical work and it is very important to be aware of your physical limits and ensure that you are not pushing yourself beyond them.

Immediately report all accidents, incidents and near misses to staff, including bites.

You cannot pick and choose which rules you listen to. If you are unsure of what to do, or if you don't understand why a rule is in place, ask a staff member. If you fail to follow instructions from staff members consequences could include no longer being able to volunteer.

In the case of an emergency, please follow staff directions. The PAC car park in front of the PAC is the meeting point in which to gather.



It's important to assess any load which you plan to lift and ensure that you follow manual handling guidelines (see next page).

There are many trip and slip hazards around the shelter and it is important to always be aware of your surroundings. In the warmer months snakes can also be a problem. Please keep an eye out and report any sightings to staff.

Following Rules and Staff Direction

It is very important to follow staff direction and to observe rules when volunteering, in order to:

- Ensure the safety of people and animals
- Prevent or slow deterioration in behaviour for animals
- Maintain or improve adoptability for animals

You cannot pick and choose which rules you listen to. If you are unsure of what to do, or if you don't understand why a rule is in place, ask a staff member. If you fail to follow instructions from staff members, consequences could include no longer being able to volunteer.

Emergency Procedures

In the case of an emergency, please follow staff directions. The customer car park in front of the PAC is the emergency assembly point in the case of an emergency. Make your way to the car park as quickly as possible and be sure to alert other staff members and volunteers as they might not have received the message or heard the announcement.

Reporting Incidents

While volunteering, RSPCA volunteers are covered by Voluntary Workers' Insurance. It is very important to immediately report all accidents, incidents and near misses to staff, including bites.

A Volunteer Injury Notification form must be completed following any type of accident or injury as soon as possible after the incident (within 24 hours at most). This can be collected from the Volunteers' Manager or any staff member, and forms can also be found at the sign in/out area. Volunteers must report all incidents and injuries at the time they occur and prior to leaving the RSPCA ACT site.

First Aid kits are located in each work area, and the first aid officers are identified on lists near the first aid boxes.

If you notice any potential safety hazards, notify a staff member. In the warmer months we are visited by quite a few snakes, so be aware of this and report any sightings immediately. It is also important to notify the area staff of any health issues you may notice in the animals you are working with, in as timely a manner as possible.

Welcome to the Team!

