

**Response to Supplementary Question from Members of the Inquiry into the
Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025**

(1) Your organisation has not received any funding from the NSW Government in the latest Budget, which means there is a risk your work as the peak body on the link between domestic violence and animal abuse will no longer be able to continue. Do you have any concerns that the NSW Government allocated \$7.9 million towards this Bill to relax gun laws, when funding to domestic violence services like yours has been cut? Please explain your answer.

Lucy's Project is a charity that was founded 12 years ago in the Northern Rivers of NSW. We create systems change to improve the safety and wellbeing of people and animals experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV) through our CARE framework. Lucy's Project promotes **collaboration** across the DFV, community, homelessness, animal welfare and veterinary service sectors to support a holistic response to victim-survivors, we provide advice to government and **advocate** for policy, program and legislative changes, we share **research** on the intersection of DFV perpetrated against people and animals, and we deliver **education** for practitioners across sectors to improve the capability and capacity of services to support people and animals experiencing DFV.

Lucy's Project opposes the *Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025* as we are highly concerned about the potential increased access to weapons and the risks of severe and fatal violence to women, children and animals experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV). We are also concerned about the significant expenditure of NSW public funds and resourcing that would be required to implement the changes proposed in the Bill.

Every human and animal victim-survivor of domestic and family violence should be able to access the supports they need to be safe. In NSW, DFV services continue to be under-funded and are unable to meet the needs of people and animals experiencing DFV. As stated in Domestic Violence NSW's 2025-2026 Pre-Budget Submission:

"High levels of unmet demand for DFV services in New South Wales reflect significant underinvestment in these services relative to other jurisdictions. Both Victoria and Queensland spend significantly more than New South Wales on DFV services and programs on a per capita basis. Victoria spends almost three times as much as New South Wales (180 per cent more), and Queensland spends about 50 per cent more."

In NSW, 14 women and 11 children were killed by an intimate partner or family member in NSW in the 12 months to March 2025 (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 2025). Furthermore, domestic violence assaults recorded by NSW Police increased by 3.6% in the two years to March 2025. In NSW, 55% of DFV and community practitioners said victim-survivors disclosed that the perpetrator killed an animal or multiple animals in the context of domestic and family violence (DFV) (DVNSW, 2020).

People often delay leaving, or do not leave, a violent partner due to concerns for the safety and wellbeing of their animal companions (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2024). 86% of NSW DFV and community workers said their clients expressed concern for their animals or disclosed animals experiencing violence to them, and 48% said their clients delayed leaving a perpetrator by more than a year due to fear or threat of an animal being harmed (DVNSW, 2020). People and animals subjected to DFV also face additional barriers to accessing the supports they need to be safe, such as animal-inclusive accommodation (AIFS, 2024).

In responding to DFV perpetrated against people and animals, it is essential to recognise that people with animals experiencing DFV may also experience other intersecting barriers to accessing the supports they require to be safe. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTQI+ people, people living in rural and regional areas, and households with children aged under 18 years are more likely than other Australians to live with companion animals (Animal Medicines Australia, 2022). People with disability can be subjected to DFV perpetrated concurrently against them and their assistance animals. The 2024 Report of the National Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches includes a case study of a woman with disability whose partner forced her to have sex with him by repeatedly harming her assistance dog.

Concerningly, 43% of NSW DFV and community workers said they did not know of services where they can refer clients with animals experiencing DFV (DVNSW, 2020). NSW DFV and community workers are keen to increase their knowledge, with 84% of NSW DFV and community workers stating they were 'very' or 'highly' interested in learning more about animals experiencing DFV. There is also an opportunity for early intervention by improving the capability of veterinary and animal welfare organisations to recognise, respond and refer clients to appropriate supports. 57% of NSW DFV and community workers said that victim-survivors had been in contact with veterinarians, the RSPCA or another animal welfare organisation while they and their animals were experiencing DFV (DVNSW, 2020).

There is an urgent need for increased supports for people and animals experiencing DFV across NSW. Lucy's Project's 2025-2026 NSW Pre-Budget Submission endorsed the recommendations from DVNSW and made 3 additional recommendations:

1. Invest \$2.3 million funding over three years for Lucy's Project to:
 - a. increase the capability of workers across sectors to identify and respond to DFV perpetrated against people and animals,
 - b. identify local services that can assist people and animals experiencing DFV and develop local referral pathways for coordinated support,
 - c. increase community awareness of animal abuse as a form of DFV and the legal protections and support services available,
 - d. promote research and knowledge translation on animal abuse as a form of DFV, and
 - e. ensure policy, program and legislative reform is informed by evidence on how to support people and animals experiencing DFV.
2. Invest \$14.5 million of funding over five years to enable specialist DFV and homelessness services to support women, LGBTQ+ people and children with animals to access safe emergency, crisis and transitional accommodation together, or to find alternative temporary and crisis accommodation and provide care for animals. This funding should be targeted to areas of NSW where there is a lack of availability of animal-inclusive DFV and homelessness services, or where those services are often at capacity and unable to meet demand.
3. Invest \$6.8 million of grants funding over three years to provide temporary and crisis accommodation for animals experiencing DFV. This three-year funding could be allocated to animal shelter and foster care programs run by animal welfare organisations as well as to pounds run by local councils which are able to demonstrate that they can provide safe and appropriate accommodation and care for those animals.

The recommended investment would achieve the following outcomes:

- people and animals at risk of DFV are identified early and receive the supports they need to ensure their safety and wellbeing;
- people and animals subjected to DFV access support that prioritises their safety and responds to their needs; and
- people and animals subjected to DFV access early support and evidenced-based responses.



We acknowledge that we live and work on the lands of First Nations peoples and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise the strength and resilience of human and animal victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and their right to safety.