

2025 - 2030 strategic plan

Honouring the past shaping the future



 **LORT
SMITH**
Melbourne's
Animal Hospital

Lort Smith has a long and respected history of delivering unconditional care to all animals, while honouring the deep and enduring bond people share with their pets. Since opening our doors in 1936 with a mission to treat the pets of those in need, our commitment has remained steadfast - even as the world around us has changed.

Societal understanding of companion animals and their role in human wellbeing has evolved dramatically. Today, the positive impact animals have on our health and happiness is widely recognised and deeply valued.

Yet with these changes come new challenges. Supporting the animals of people experiencing hardship is far more complex than it was nearly a century ago. Today, there is far better understanding and acceptance of the drivers behind societal issues. This knowledge means we must deliver services that are not just compassionate, but that have a holistic approach across issues such as mental health, homelessness, and domestic and family violence.

It is our goal to continue assisting members of the public who are suffering from these issues, through expansion of our pet therapy programs and emergency shelter for pets of people escaping crisis situations. Whilst continuing to provide free or discounted veterinarian services to the pet of people who are suffering financial hardship.

This knowledge also calls for us to work more deeply and collaboratively to make sure the strength of the human-animal connection delivers the profound impact we know it can.

In this evolving landscape, operating as a registered charity, achieving financial sustainability is vital. We strive to offer access to high-quality, affordable veterinary care, regardless of a pet owner's circumstances, while ensuring the long-term resilience of our services.

To do this, we rely on the generosity and shared compassion of our community. It's essential we provide meaningful opportunities for our staff, volunteers, donors, and clients to contribute and feel part of something truly impactful.

Lort Smith is part of the social fabric of our community. Our story is rich and enduring, built on compassion, expertise, and trust. We have many important stories to tell - and it is our responsibility to ensure they are heard.



Drivers for change

The growing need for accessible care



Caring for animals is deeply rewarding, and the bond between people and their pets is especially powerful during times of crisis or hardship. In these moments, our animals provide crucial comfort and support. However, the cost-of-living crisis and the complexities of modern life create significant stress for pet owners facing financial difficulties, making it harder for them to care for their beloved companions.

Increasing numbers of pets and the need for education



More people are welcoming a pet into their family than ever before. At the same time, we must provide care to ever-increasing numbers of surrendered pets in our adoption facility. It is vital that people are equipped with the knowledge to choose and care for their animals well. We have a responsibility to inform and educate not only people with pets, but also the broader community about the importance of good pet health and wellbeing and due care when choosing a new forever companion.

Animals' vital role in supporting human health



We have long understood the wide-ranging physical and mental health benefits that come from interacting with animals and the social cohesion it can facilitate. At a time when supporting mental health and strengthening community connection is more important than ever, we have a powerful opportunity to reinforce and grow our established role in promoting wellbeing through the human-animal bond. To this end, people who are suffering mental illness or who are socially isolated or recovering from trauma, injury or illness will continue to benefit through the therapeutic effects of interacting with animals under our programs.

Increasing expectations for rich engagement from our stakeholders



Like many charities and not-for-profits, we are seeing a shift in stakeholder expectations. Our clients, donors, and supporters now seek more meaningful engagement, along with increased transparency and accountability. They want clear, tangible insights into how their contributions are driving positive health and wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable pets and their people, and evidence of the impact of the work we do. In addition, they wish to see how our programs assist persons who do not own a pet but who can psychologically benefit through our therapy programs.

Caring for our people



Our staff are highly skilled and deeply committed to the animals we care for - and their people. While they love the work they do, it can be especially emotionally demanding. Creating a supportive, enjoyable, and rewarding workplace is essential, not only for retaining our dedicated team, but also for continuing to deliver the compassionate care that defines us.

Lort Smith strategy to 2030

Pillar 1

Equitable access to veterinary and animal care services

We provide care for animals and, through that care, we also support the people who cherish and depend on them, always prioritising those most in need.

What we will do

Provide high-quality, appropriate, accessible and affordable care that considers both pet and person.

Be respected and valued for our clinical capacity, capability and care.

Engage with the community in meaningful ways to facilitate best outcomes for pets and their people.

Pillar 2

Recognised leaders in advancing veterinary care and animal wellness and the human animal connection

Our leadership will focus on supporting the veterinary industry, educating the community on pet care, and championing the benefits of the human-animal connection.

What we will do

Educate and empower the community to care responsibly for their pets.

Be a trusted voice in veterinary care and pet wellbeing.

Support and elevate the role of all veterinary professionals, championing their wellbeing across the veterinary sector.

Establish ourselves as the trusted shelter of choice, providing respectful and empathetic support to people facing the difficult decision to surrender their pet.

Be leaders in understanding and promoting the human-animal bond.



Our purpose

To keep pets and people together by providing accessible compassionate care and championing the powerful impact of the human-animal bond.

Our vision

Every pet receives the care they deserve, and the joy of animal companionship is accessible to all.

Pillar 3

A values-driven workplace that prioritises employee care and development

We will become a preferred employer by investing in the growth and wellbeing of our team, and by recognising the value volunteers bring to the team.

What we will do

Foster strong and collaborative relationships with education and training providers to offer leading professional development of our teams.

Transparent, effective communication, strategic guidance, and streamlined processes.

Our people are listened to, valued, appreciated and experience a true sense of care and belonging.

Pillar 4

A respected and resilient organisation that is future ready

Balancing mission and commercial responsibility, we will uphold strong governance as we grow and adapt to future needs.

What we will do

Providing a broad range of services which help fund investment and subsidised animal care for people in need.

Actively pursue enduring financial sustainability through strategic relationships and partnerships.

Deepen and expand donor engagement through varied channels that advance the joy of giving.

Digital transformation to improve service delivery and better manage our missional responsibilities.

Full-fee services that are fair and reasonable, with approaches that openly and honestly secure maximum financial benefits. This element of our operations is ancillary to and assists with our public benevolent purposes.

Amplify the impact of the animal-human connection for the benefit of society.



What success looks like

Pillar 1

Equitable access to veterinary and animal care services

We have enhanced our reputation and are known as 'the' compassionate and caring organisation that provides quality accessible veterinary care to animals and the pets of people in need.

People who cannot afford private vet practice fees know that their pets can receive quality veterinary care at an affordable price, more than this, they know that we are there for them at times of crisis

Our full-fee paying clients feel good when using our services, in the knowledge they are helping pets less fortunate than their own to receive the same standard of care.

Our volunteers and donors and the wider community, including business, go the extra mile to provide the support we need to be able to provide compassionate, affordable vet care.

Pillar 2

Recognised leaders in advancing veterinary care and animal wellness and the human animal connection

Media and others both inside and outside of the veterinary industry seek out our knowledge, opinions and commentary on pet health and wellbeing.

Our vets feel their expertise and experience is recognised and valued and their wellbeing is a priority.

We are recognised for our empathy and holistic approach to caring for surrendered animals, and the public trusts that every animal receives the highest standard of care and the best possible chance at a new life.

We are constantly seeking out and taking advantage of opportunities to impart knowledge on caring responsibly for pets.

Our outreach work includes school visits, where we deliver valuable programs that are well-regarded and align with the school curriculum.

Our outreach programs provide evidence of the positive impact the human animal bond has on individuals and communities.





Pillar 3

A values-driven workplace that prioritises employee care and development

We are well known and highly respected in the veterinary sector as an employer that values, supports, and invests in the growth and development of its people.

Our people are motivated by a strong sense of purpose and take pride in coming to work each day.

Employees choose to remain with us for the long term.

Our collaborative and supportive workplace culture means our teams are delivering outstanding service, creating positive experiences for clients and stakeholders.

Pillar 4

A respected and resilient organisation that is future ready

Our fee-for-service veterinary operations are financially self-sustaining, consistently operating at or above break-even.

We are seeing consistent year-on-year growth in support from our gifts in Wills and philanthropic donors. We are able to exponentially increase our core missional work, providing substantial support to those who are in greatest need of our help.

We are admired as the largest not for profit animal hospital in Australia, providing vital animal health and wellbeing services to all animals, regardless of circumstances.

Full fee-paying clients are extra loyal because they know they are helping others while receiving a good service and a fair cost for their own pet's care.

When people think of Lort Smith, they immediately associate us with protecting and nurturing the special bond between people and their pets.





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