

# IMPACT REPORT

FY 2023/24



Animal Management in Rural and  
Remote Indigenous Communities

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Young kittens from community receiving a check up.



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRS'



The core strategic focus for the AMRRIC Board during the reporting period has been the diversification of AMRRICs business through being innovative and responsive to new business opportunities.

AMRRIC's core values and its unique approach to companion animal management in Indigenous communities; founded on a deep respect for the cultures and traditional ways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and working with a model developed over years of dialogue and engagement in remote communities.

The benefits and impact of our unique and innovative approach is increasingly recognised by the community and government agencies in all tiers of Government resulting in the opportunity this year for the first time to apply our unique approach to companion animal management in overseas jurisdictions.

These 'fully cost recovery' projects provide a sound financial basis for AMRRIC, further securing the organisations viability to continue advocacy for access to essential services for remote communities and the improvement of animal health and community health.

The Board wishes to commend our CEO for their success in securing these international opportunities.

As Co-Chairs of the Board, we are pleased to share with AMRRIC's many and valued supporters the organisation's outputs and impacts for the 2023-2024 financial year. The team have spent a total of 240 days on ground working with communities over the past year, providing veterinary desexing and animal health care consultations, education, biosecurity awareness and training, and companion animal census and needs assessments.

The importance of AMRRIC's work nationally is reflected on in the paws-itive outcomes in this report.

The board continues to mature in its discussions around AMRRIC's strategy with a new 5-year plan due to be released in 2025.

The strategy will build on the accomplishments

and broadening networks both nationally and internationally that AMRRIC has built through its focus on communities and building local capacity in companion animal management, achieved by sustainable access to services, pathways for employment and locally prioritised research.

The Board thanks our dedicated team for their continued commitment and recognises the impact that their work is having in remote communities.

During the year we also farewelled two of our board members who had both held their roles since 2020.

In November 2023, AMRRIC farewelled Joanne Abraham who during her tenure, held the role of Chair of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee, and for her final twelve months was appointed to Chair of the Board.

In May 2024 the board also farewelled Karl Dyason, who for the entirety of his time with AMRRIC had held the Chair of the Finance and Risk Committee role.

The impact of their time and expertise provided to the organisation and particularly the board and management team, will continue to be appreciated and recognised, and we wish them many successes in their new pursuits.

On behalf of the board, we offer our sincere appreciation to our supporters, volunteers, staff, and to all those who continue to collaborate and value AMRRIC's contribution to remote companion animal management; we look forward to working with you in the years ahead.

“  
**The team spent a total of 240 days on ground working with communities this year.**  
”



**PROFESSOR STEVE ROGERS, CO-CHAIR**



**JUSTIN WELFARE, CO-CHAIR**

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

It's that time of year again!

As I reflect on the past twelve months, I proudly recognise the tremendous efforts of our staff, contractors and volunteers for their contribution towards AMRRIC's achievements this year - despite an environment of significant challenge.

Ongoing staff shortages across the veterinary sector continue to impact the organisation, making it difficult to attract staff to work in remote Australia.

Even with the reduced capacity, the AMRRIC team has consistently delivered high quality services and programs in remote communities across the country.

It is with enthusiasm that our organisation expects to enter the next year with a full complement of staff and several new contractors that have joined the AMRRIC team over the last twelve months.

Our Innovation and Strategy team have furthered our deep commitment to One Health, and their work is helping to elevate One Health from an academic theoretical approach into tangible evidence-based programs with multisectoral outcomes.

Furthermore, recognition of AMRRIC's One Health community-led approach has led to the successful delivery of our companion animal management programs within an international context, with the program in Nauru renewed for a further eighteen months.

Thanks to a robust network of stakeholders with strong collaboration and shared vision for improved health outcomes in remote communities, significant progress and developments have been achieved and will continue to be a priority for our advocacy work into the future.

I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the Board and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee in development of a new Strategic Plan, which will guide the organisation through the next five years, that will be released in 2025.

And to you, our valued partners and supporters, thank you. All of the achievements presented within this report are only made possible with your kind contributions and dedication to our shared vision of 'Healthy Animals, Healthy Proud Communities.'

**DR BROOKE RANKMORE,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**



# AMRRIC PILLARS

## COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

AMRRIC works to mitigate geographic and socio-economic barriers, and assist remote communities to access vital veterinary services. Our companion animal management centres around veterinary programs that provide desexing, antiparasitic medications and animal welfare focused treatments, aiming to improve dog and cat population health and control and in turn, improve community health, safety and wellbeing.



## BUILDING KNOWLEDGE & CAPACITY

Local engagement, knowledge and skills are critical to the sustainability and effectiveness of remote community companion animal health and management programs. To enhance animal health and management outcomes, AMRRIC has developed a variety of animal-related educational resources, activities and programs, which operate on their own or ideally in delivery alongside regular veterinary services. AMRRIC is finalising accredited and non-accredited skills-based training which will provide local community members with the opportunity to participate in and contribute to their animal management program outcomes.

## RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

AMRRIC works collaboratively with researchers and communities to support research projects that promote advocacy for One Health principles, address existing knowledge gaps and support appropriate outcomes in public health and safety for people and animals in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The outputs of AMRRIC's work and research collaborations help to facilitate evidence-based practice, inform public policy and direct resources to areas of most need, resulting in tangible benefits for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their people, and their companion animals.

## INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Community dog and cat population management impacts upon a large variety of realms including biosecurity and public health. Through multi-disciplinary collaboration, AMRRIC designs innovative projects that work to evidence the need, as well as the impacts that AMRRIC and our partners are achieving. By monitoring our progress over time, we're able to reflect upon challenges and opportunities, and adapt our programs to ensure sustained community benefit.



# 174

COMMUNITY SERVICES PROVIDED

# 952

PEOPLE ENGAGED IN TRAINING & ED EVENTS

# 19

SCHOOLS VISITED ON ED PROGRAMS

# 837

ANIMALS DESEXED

# 200

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

# 240

TOTAL DAYS SPENT IN COMMUNITY

# 42

TRIPS WHERE SERVICES PROVIDED

# 17<sub>k</sub>

TOTAL DOSES OF ANTIPARASITIC TREATMENTS ADMINISTERED

# OUR IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

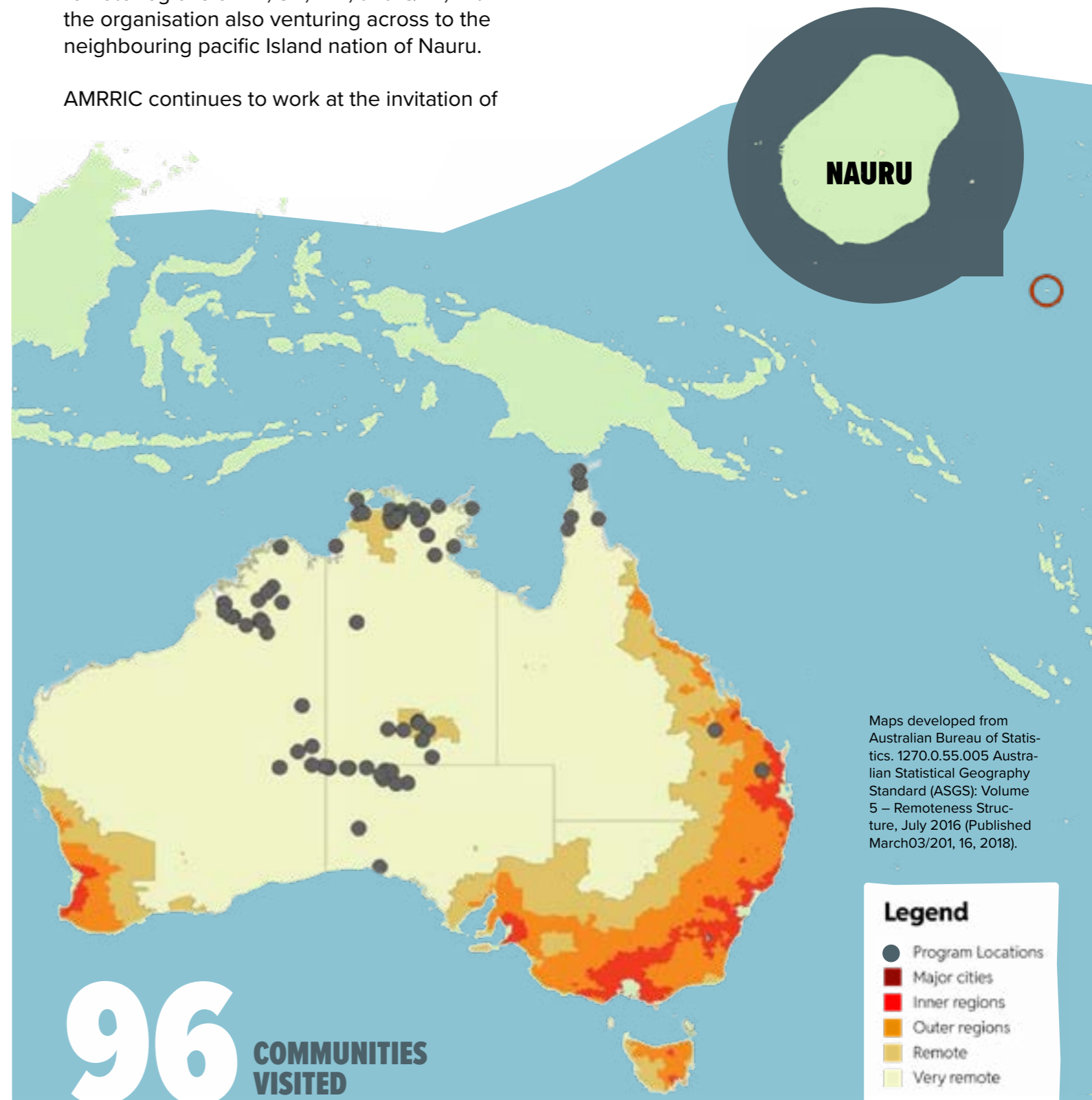
# OUR REACH

AMRRIC collaborates with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities nationally.

Over the past year our reach has focused across remote regions of NT, SA, WA, and QLD, with the organisation also venturing across to the neighbouring pacific Island nation of Nauru.

AMRRIC continues to work at the invitation of

and offers to collaborate with communities, co-designing and implementing veterinary and education services to meet the community's needs for companion animal management.



# 96

 COMMUNITIES VISITED

# COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT



“ It means a lot that AMRRIC comes to our community. The vet nurses help keep my dogs healthy ”

Helen, Community Elder  
(Pictured left)



## VETERINARY PROGRAMS

Demand for companion animal management services is rising, driven by an increase in service requests from existing partners and inquiries from stakeholders in new regions. With a higher volume of requests for veterinary and educational programs, and a limited dry season for delivery, we are shifting towards longer-duration programs

We have delivered six programs of two weeks or over, which includes one three-week program. While longer duration trips bring greater logistical and fatigue-management challenges, spending longer on the ground is not only supporting the demand for service delivery and reducing travel costs, but is also strengthening our relationships with communities.

# 4.1k

ANIMALS TREATED FOR PARASITES

# 102

VETERINARY SERVICES DELIVERED

Reproductive control is the cornerstone of effective animal management programs and is the foundation of AMRRIC's veterinary service offerings. Dog and cat population management programs globally have demonstrated that surgical desexing is the most effective and humane reproductive control method to stabilise dog and cat populations, improve animal health and welfare and reduce public health and safety risks. For large populations where there is significant turnover (i.e. breeding and mortalities), concurrent use of chemical contraceptives can be used to temporarily slow reproduction, effectively 'buying time' and preventing further reproduction before surgical desexing targets can be achieved.

AMRRIC's vet services are also designed to mitigate public health risks through preventative treatments for zoonotic parasites and pathogens, as well as providing treatments for animal welfare concerns as required. Together, these offerings address the basic health and welfare needs of remote community companion animal populations, as well as helping to reduce risks to the physical and mental health of their owners.

Educational opportunity for community members to see our Vet Teams work up close.



A community cat with our vet team.

# BUILDING CAPACITY



Educational resources created by volunteers.

## SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Last year, AMRRIC's [Dog Mob Cat Crew \(DMCC\) Education Program](#) launched, and has resonated with students and community members in rural and remote communities across Australia.

The programs, lessons and resources bring culturally responsive and engaging companion animal health education to the classroom and community groups such as Families as First Teachers.

Over the past year, we have amplified DMCC's presence to promote responsible pet ownership in remote communities. With an emphasis on regular visits and ongoing relationship building, our 23/24 FY impact is demonstrated in the continuity of important programs which have all been running for four consecutive years, including:

- In partnership with MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC), DMCC has now had the privilege to deliver One Health focused education to a number of communities within the vast MacDonnell region. This year we were able to participate in MCR's Healthy Communities Events, collaborate with Families as First Teachers, hosted three events, engaged 375 community members and visited hosted three events, and engaged with 262 students and community members.
- Funded by Inspire NT, AMRRIC's STEAM focused 'Secret Life of Remote Dogs' program uses innovative and engaging methods of [GPS tracking to teach children about the scientific method](#). Students learn about the scientific method and hypothesize about where their

dogs might go during the day and the night, and why they might go there. Building on AMRRIC's successful delivery of this program since 2021, this year we delivered this exciting program in collaboration with East Arnhem Regional Council.

- AMRRIC continues to be successful in securing National Science Week grants to deliver community educational programs. Each of these programs focuses on STEM education and promotion. This year the education program was delivered to Murrupurtiyanuwi Catholic Primary School alongside the Tiwi Rangers and focused on the relationship and biodiversity impact of companion animals and local fauna.

By collaborating to address holistic health goals, AMRRIC, our partners and the communities involved with these programs have cemented strong relationships over the years.

We have been able to see students grow their recognition and knowledge of the content and teachings, helping communities make informed decisions on the health of their pets, themselves, and their community.



## FEATURED RESOURCE: EMPATHY ANIMATION



This animation is a great education resource, created to help teach young children empathy towards animals. The video, developed by AMRRIC in partnership with Indigenous animation group Nani Creative, shows the story of a young boy looking after his dog and realising that his dog has feelings, just like he does, and that it is his responsibility to look after and protect his dog.

The animation is great to use in communities in classrooms, youth groups, or early years learning groups. As it is a video, it can be played easily on a TV or computer in many different locations. The resource is very useful to help teach children to look after their pets, be kind to animals, and keep their pets and their communities happy and healthy. View the animation here: <https://www.amrric.org/topic/empathy/view/empathyanimation-you-feel-they-feel-we-feel/>



School children watching the empathy animation during an education session.

**535**  
STUDENTS ENGAGED

**365**  
VOLUNTEER-MADE  
EDUCATION RESOURCES

**9**  
EDUCATION RESOURCES  
DEVELOPED

# RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

## ONE HEALTH RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Since securing philanthropic funding for AMRRIC's One Health Research Coordinator (OHRC) in 2022, AMRRIC's work to coordinate collaborative efforts to evidence the One Health linkages and fill knowledge gaps in the relationships between human, animal and environmental health has been amplified. Between July 2023 and June 2024, we've:

- Updated our research policy and research partnership processes, embedding ethical research principles that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and capacity building, require communities to receive tangible benefits from participating in research projects, and ensure that research knowledge is provided back to communities in an accessible and meaningful form.
- Partnered with researchers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the development of seven research proposals, investigating a range of topics including the potentially zoonotic roundworm *Strongyloides stecoralis*, surgical complications arising from the tick-borne disease *Ehrlichia canis* and contextual factors influencing the development of anti-microbial resistance. Five of these seven proposals have been supported through grants and in-kind contributions and are now underway.
- Co-authored two published papers and have a further four papers in preparation for submission to peer-reviewed journals, all of which include Indigenous co-authors.



Jeremiah Larrwanbuy Baker presenting at the Big Hairy People and Pets Conference in the Gold Coast, 2024

“It’s great to see growing support from researchers across fields of expertise working to address knowledge gaps on One Health topics, they’re so important for the health of animals and people in remote communities.”

Dr Jessica Hoopes,  
AMRRIC OHRC

## ONE HEALTH ADVOCACY

AMRRIC is increasingly being recognised as an expert in One Health. This year our expertise and experience have contributed to:

- Supervision and mentoring of 74 university students tasked with completing literature reviews and developing culturally and contextually appropriate knowledge translation resources. This engagement is building the One Health knowledge and awareness of the next generation of professionals.
- 29 presentations delivered at seventeen conferences, reaching a collective audience of over 3,700 people, including representatives from government, the veterinary, medical and environment sectors, corporations, university students and the general public.
- AMRRIC's work has been featured on Pooches at Play (Channel 10) and the National Indigenous Times, helping to raise awareness of the needs and benefits of One Health focused animal management services among broad audiences.
- Our staff were invited to present to the World Small Animal Veterinary Association, advocating on the need to develop context-specific guidelines for Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship for field-based veterinary clinics, and were members of the working group for the development of the upcoming Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Animals in Disasters Handbook.
- Five public policy consultation submissions and one ministerial briefing, covering topics including animal welfare and biosecurity, dangerous dog legislation, feral cat threat abatement and animal health local capacity.



AMRRIC's OHRC Dr Jessica Hoopes (second from the left) with colleagues at the Australian Veterinary Association Conference, 2024.



## SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER REPRESENTATION

AMRRIC is committed to uplifting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and supporting the next generation of One Health professionals. Highlights for this year include:

- Our continued co-supervision of veterinarian Dr Tamara Riley as she completes her PhD investigating One Health and its application to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Supporting Nikki Gong (Wujal Wujal Animal Management Worker) to attend and co-present an oral presentation at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference on the emergency response efforts to support the companion animal populations at Wujal Wujal in the aftermath of Cyclone Jasper flooding.
- Assisting Bindee Davis (AMRRIC Advisory Committee member and veterinary student) to undertake a research project on the effectiveness of cold-sterilisation techniques in field hospital settings. AMRRIC also supported Bindee to attend and present a poster on this project, as well as the importance of Indigenous leadership in research involving communities, at NATSIEH conference (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health conference).
- Launching our new newsletter – Sharing Tracks, designed as a network of support and collaboration for Animal Management Workers and Environmental Health Workers in rural and remote communities, allowing them to ask questions, share knowledge and celebrate their wins.

# RESEARCH & ADVOCACY



*AMRRIC Vet Nurse Helen Bigmore with Wujal Wujal Animal Management Worker Nikki Gong responding to the emergency in Wujal Wujal, 2023*

# INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY



“ The best thing about working with the AMRRIC team is having them there to support me and teach me new things. I want to continue doing this work. I would like to see all the dogs happy, and all animals, like the cats, happy. ”

Nikita, Tiwi Ranger (pictured above)

## BIOSECURITY TRAINING

AMRRIC's Biosecurity Pilot Project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, has continued over the last 12 months, aiming to improve remote Indigenous communities' animal health surveillance and preparedness through collaboration.

Core outcomes of the project are employment and training to enhance on-ground remote Indigenous community biosecurity and animal health capacity. In the past year, the project has generated 37 Indigenous employment opportunities and trained 42 people in animal disease surveillance. Beyond the trainees, through door to door conversations at every house within the 13 communities visited, AMRRIC and the project's trainees have worked to raise awareness of biosecurity threats and how to report them. At the same time, our teams have provided immediate and tangible benefits to the community's animals in the form of broad-spectrum anti-parasitic medications and first aid treatments - all funded by the project and adhering to the mantra of 'no survey without service'. While endemic disease continues to be a challenge for animals in these communities with limited access to vet services, fortunately we have detected no new biosecurity threats.

## HELPING COMMUNITIES MEASURE THEIR ANIMAL MANAGEMENT NEEDS

In both the Biosecurity Pilot Project, as well as AMRRIC's broader work, we continue to support community partners to measure and monitor the size and health of their dog and cat populations, in order to track the impact of their animal management activities. The AMRRIC App – a custom designed digital application that allows for animal population data capture - is a key tool that AMRRIC uses within its own programs, as well as offering to community-based partners. Indigenous Data Sovereignty, and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protections have been prioritized within the AMRRIC App's architecture and data access and storage arrangements, and the App interface has been specifically designed for culturally and linguistically diverse users. While the AMRRIC App prototype has been in use for a number of years, this year a milestone in its development was achieved, with the App being made available through the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

42

PEOPLE TRAINED IN BIOSECURITY

2.6k

ANIMALS TREATED FOR PARASITES



## SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH OUTBREAKS AND EMERGENCIES

AMRRIC has continued to raise awareness of the tick-borne disease *ehrlichiosis*, which was first detected in Australia in 2020. With support from the Queensland Government, this year we've partnered with three QLD-based Local Governments to undertake community-wide censuses, while concurrently delivering treatments to all animals and developing tailored educational resources. The data collected during the censuses has been analysed and strategic animal management recommendations provided back to each community. This funding has also allowed us to distribute 7680 doses of highly effective tick, flea and mite medications to all 16 Indigenous Local Government Authorities in QLD, to help them manage tick burdens and reduce the risks of *ehrlichiosis*.

When Cyclone Jasper and the devastating associated flooding resulted in the emergency evacuation of Wujal Wujal in Far North Queensland, AMRRIC sprang into action, supplying a veterinary first aid kit and providing telemedicine based support to our Project Officer/Vet Nurse who worked tirelessly alongside the community's Animal Management Worker to ensure the community's dogs and cats were cared for. Behind-the-scenes, we were also busy advocating the community's animal management needs to state government and other supporting agencies, eventually resulting in the Local Government receiving disaster support funding to cover the costs associated with managing the community's animal during the prolonged event.

Campbell, Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire, 2024

# EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

## NAURU VET SERVICES

AMRRIC's respectful and culturally responsive animal management approach has been recognised by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, resulting in AMRRIC being invited to lead the development of a companion animal population management program in Nauru. To support this work, AMRRIC has been fortunate to receive funding for the next two years. Preliminary service delivery and stakeholder engagement visits have occurred and will continue as we work with local partners to co-design an appropriate companion animal population management solution for the island nation. Nauru has no veterinarians on the island and has not had consistent

visiting veterinary services for many years; addressing access to essential services also provides AMRRIC the opportunity to engage with the local community, providing education, improving companion animal health, while working towards a long-term co-designed strategy.



*AMRRIC vet team performing surgery in Nauru, 2023*

## INITIAL PROGRAM OUTPUTS

# 270

**ANIMALS SURGICALLY DESEXED**

# 710

**PARASITE TREATMENTS DELIVERED**

# 261

**ANIMALS VACCINATED**



*Nauru resident Dawson with his dog*

# FUNDING & FINANCIALS

## THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

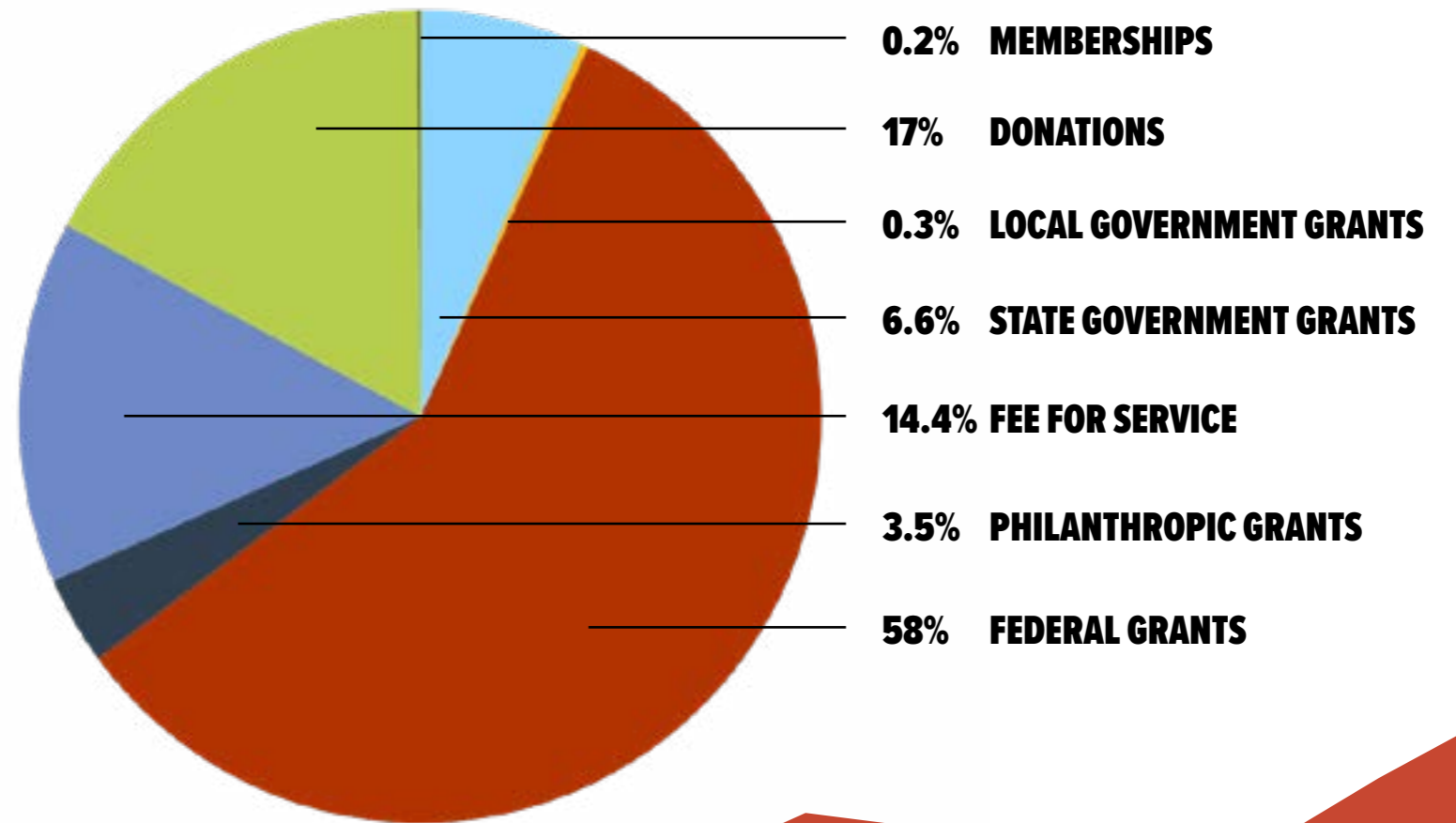
AMRRIC relies on the incredible generosity of our supporters and partners.

Despite economic challenges and cost-of-living pressures, your unwavering support has enabled us to make a meaningful impact on the health and wellbeing of companion animals and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who care for them.

We are committed to delivering impactful results using your contributions, and invite you to review our 2023-2024 financials.

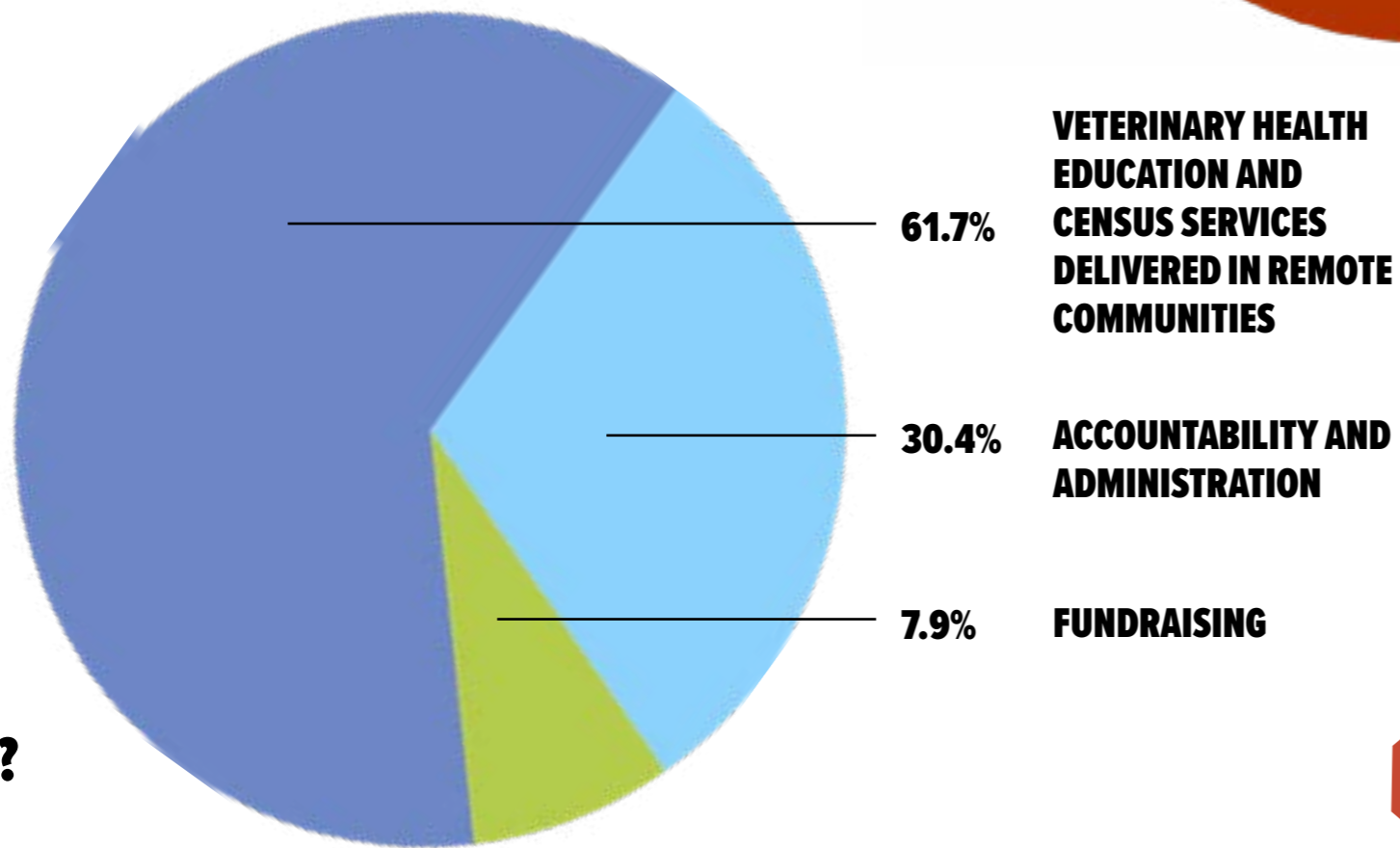
**TOTAL INCOME:  
\$3,707,650**

### WHERE DID THE FUNDS COME FROM?



**TOTAL EXPENSES:  
\$3,307,015**

### WHERE DID THE FUNDS GO?



Community dog who received antiparasitic his dose.



Animal Management in Rural and  
Remote Indigenous Communities