

Rotary First Responder Mobile App

Project Plan

Revision 2.2 – May 2026

Synopsis

Every day, firefighters, paramedics, police, and rescue crews attend incidents involving injured or distressed animals, often facing fear, uncertainty, and significant physical and psychological risk. Many leave these scenes carrying trauma long after the incident is over.

The Rotary First Responder App Project has been developed to change that.

This innovative initiative will provide frontline emergency personnel with practical, evidence-based guidance to support safer decision-making, dynamic risk assessment, species-specific hazard awareness, and access to specialist support services during animal-related emergencies.

By helping responders better manage these complex incidents, the project aims to reduce injury, emotional strain, and long-term trauma while improving community safety and animal welfare outcomes.

Rotary has always stood for Service Above Self. This project represents an opportunity to stand beside those who protect our communities every day—ensuring more responders return home safe in body, mind, and spirit.

1. Project Title

First Responder Mobile App – Protecting Firefighter, Paramedic, Police and Rescue Crews

2. Project Overview

The Rotary First Responder App is a nationally scalable digital initiative designed to support frontline emergency personnel firefighter, paramedic, police and rescue crews attending incidents involving injured or distressed animals.

The application will provide practical, evidence-informed guidance to minimise potential physical, emotional and psychological trauma to emergency service personnel, enhance ethical decision-making, inter-agency coordination, and animal welfare outcomes in time-critical situations.

The app is intended for use by first-arrival responders including police, fire, ambulance, SES, local government personnel, and authorised volunteers. It does not replace specialist rescue or veterinary services; rather, it complements existing operational procedures during the critical early stages of an incident.

The project aligns strongly with Rotary’s humanitarian mission by addressing community safety, responder wellbeing, animal welfare, and disaster resilience through innovation, collaboration, and sustainable community service.

3. Community Need and Problem Identification

The project emerged from repeated observations and discussions with emergency responders, wildlife rescue organisations, veterinarians, and rural communities regarding the growing frequency and complexity of animal-related incidents.

These incidents commonly involve:

- road collisions involving animals - a horse or kangaroo through a windscreen of a vehicle
- humans impacted by animals – rider trapped under a horse
- livestock transport accidents - sheep, pig, cattle stock crate, and horse float rollovers
- bushfire wildlife and livestock emergencies – burnt, injured or trapped animals
- flood wildlife and livestock emergencies- injured or trapped animals
- stranded or trapped animals- animals caught in trees, powerlines or fences during a fire
- aggressive or distressed animals – animals in the back of cars after an accident protecting the occupants and hampering rescue by paramedics
- companion animals involved in domestic emergencies – animals caught in drains or wall cavities
- animals guarding owners during medical emergencies- preventing paramedic assistance

Frontline responders are frequently required to make rapid decisions in unpredictable environments without immediate access to structured guidance or specialist support. Many responders report uncertainty regarding:

- species-specific behaviour,
- safe exclusion zones,
- de-escalation techniques,
- humane and ethical animal management,
- referral pathways,
- legal or welfare considerations
- what do I do now
- what do I do next
- how do I keep my crew safe from injury by the animal during the incident

While agencies provide general operational training, there is currently no nationally consistent basic training or, real-time digital support tool specifically designed to guide first responders through animal-related incidents.

This identified gap presents risks including:

- physical injury,
- zoonotic exposure,
- psychological trauma,
- poor animal welfare outcomes,
- delayed scene resolution,
- increased public safety risks.

4. Evidence of Need and Training Gaps

The need for the initiative has been identified through:

- direct consultation with serving and retired emergency service personnel,
- discussions with wildlife rescue and veterinary organisations,
- reviews of operational incidents reported publicly and within responder networks,
- recognition of inconsistent training exposure between agencies and jurisdictions,
- feedback from responders who have attended animal incidents without specialist assistance available.

Reports through to emergency communications – a quick glance brought up 45 animal related incidents between the 2/05/2026 and 24/05/2026 noting that not all incidents are reported with the animal in the pager message, some only have assist agency.

Consultation has identified that most emergency responders receive only limited or no exposure to animal incident management during formal training programs. Existing training generally focuses on:

- human rescue priorities,
- scene preservation,
- hazard management,

- public safety.

Specialist animal handling training such as air lifting or extracting large animals from precarious situations is typically restricted to specific units or external organisations and is not consistently available to general frontline personnel.

As a result, responders often rely on personal judgement, prior experience, or ad hoc advice when attending animal-related emergencies.

The proposed app addresses this operational gap by delivering:

- immediate practical guidance,
 - structured risk prompts,
 - species-specific information,
 - support service access based on the closest resource
 - safer decision-making tools.
-

5. Emergency Services Consultation and Input

The initiative has been developed with direct input from stakeholders across:

- emergency services,
- animal welfare organisations,
- veterinary professionals,
- wildlife rescue groups,
- community safety advocates.

Feedback from these consultations has shaped the proposed functionality and operational approach of the application, including:

- simplicity of use under operational conditions,
- rapid access to critical information,
- visual hazard prompts,
- geo-linked support directories,
- compatibility with existing incident response frameworks,
- emphasis on responder safety and duty of care.

Emergency service stakeholders have consistently reinforced the need for:

- concise operational guidance,
- non-technical user interfaces,
- rapid accessibility in the field,
- tools that complement rather than replace existing procedures.

This collaborative consultation process ensures the app is practical, operationally relevant, and responsive to the real-world needs of frontline personnel.

6. Project Objectives

The project aims to:

- improve safety outcomes for emergency responders,
 - support ethical and humane animal welfare responses,
 - reduce responder stress and uncertainty,
 - improve inter-agency coordination,
 - provide rapid access to specialist support services,
 - establish a nationally scalable support framework,
 - demonstrate Rotary leadership in innovative community safety initiatives.
 - Promote the Rotary brand nationally and internationally, having the Rotary logo and project statement hardcoded into the design. This will elevate our visibility and promote us as a relevant and supportive organisation in the space and minds of thousands of emergency first responders.
-

7. Project Delivery Plan

Stage 1 – Stakeholder Consultation & Scoping

- Consultation workshops
- Operational needs assessment
- Feature prioritisation
- Governance establishment

Stage 2 – Design & Prototype

- User interface development
- Wireframe creation
- Functional prototype testing

Stage 3 – Technical Development

- Backend infrastructure
- CMS development
- iOS and Android builds
- Secure login systems

Stage 4 – Testing & Validation

- Controlled pilot testing
- Stakeholder review
- User feedback integration

Stage 5 – Launch & Awareness

- Public launch
- Emergency services engagement
- Rotary awareness campaign
- Training and onboarding materials

Stage 6 – Ongoing Governance & Expansion

- Content updates
- Annual reviews
- Expansion of species and regions
- Long-term support partnerships

8. Budget Summary (Indicative – ex GST)

Based on documentation supplied by Think Digital, the indicative Version 1 development costs are:

Item	Estimated Cost
Scoping & Design	\$15,000
Technical Design (FIGMA Prototype)	\$25,000
Development (Backend, CMS, iOS & Android)	\$120,000
Testing & Feedback Integration	\$25,000
Publishing	\$8,000
Hosting (Annual)	\$1,050

Estimated Core Development Total

\$191,050 ex GST

Additional Recommended Budget Allocation

Think Digital recommends allowing approximately \$50,000 for:

- branding,
- analytics dashboard,
- app website,
- training resources,
- marketing materials,
- app launch promotion,
- support content,
- future enhancements,
- and onboarding systems.

Recommended Total Funding Envelope: Approximately \$250,000 Ex GST

9. Community Benefit and Long-Term Sustainability

The project will continue delivering benefits long after development is complete.

Long-term benefits include:

- safer emergency incident management,
- reduced responder injuries and trauma,
- improved public safety,
- more humane animal outcomes,
- stronger inter-agency coordination,
- increased community confidence in emergency response systems.

The application includes a scalable Content Management System allowing low-cost ongoing updates and future expansion.

Governance will be supported through a Rotary-led framework with ongoing input from emergency services, veterinary, wildlife rescue, and academic stakeholders.

The not-for-profit structure ensures the initiative remains community-focused, sustainable, and accessible for long-term use.

10. Beneficiaries

Primary beneficiaries include:

- Police services
- Fire and rescue services
- Ambulance services
- State Emergency Services
- Local government responders
- Wildlife rescue volunteers
- Remote Air Medical Services
- National Parks staff
- Military Reserve personnel deployed during disasters
- Quicker resolutions for patients, animals and responders

Potential direct beneficiaries exceed 300,000 emergency and response personnel nationally.

Secondary beneficiaries include:

- rural and regional communities,
- motorists and the general public,
- veterinary and wildlife organisations,
- thousands of injured or distressed animals annually.

11. Technology Partner – Think Digital

Following consultation and project scoping, Think Digital has been identified as the preferred technology partner for the development of the Rotary First Responder App. Think Digital has demonstrated strong capability in delivering scalable, secure, and user-focused digital solutions aligned with complex operational environments, particularly across agriculture, remote service delivery, immersive technologies, and regional industries.

Think Digital brings valuable expertise in the application of technology to rural and remote sectors, including:

- digital agriculture platforms,
- remote veterinary support systems,
- connected field-service technologies,
- cloud-based data management,
- immersive Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) solutions,
- and mobile-first operational applications.

This experience is particularly relevant to the Rotary First Responder App, given the project's intersection between emergency response, animal welfare, regional communities, and real-time field decision-making.

The company's work in agricultural and veterinary technology environments demonstrates a strong understanding of:

- animal management challenges,
- remote operational conditions,
- limited-connectivity environments,
- frontline usability requirements,
- and the importance of intuitive, rapid-access information systems under pressure.

Their capability in VR and AR technologies also presents future opportunities for the project, including:

- immersive responder training simulations,
- scenario-based learning environments,
- species-specific hazard recognition training,
- mental preparedness exercises,
- and enhanced educational resources for emergency agencies and volunteers.

The selection of Think Digital was based on:

- demonstrated experience in custom application development,
- expertise in secure cloud-based infrastructure,
- ability to build scalable Content Management System (CMS) architecture,
- experience with remote-service and agricultural technologies,
- understanding of mobile-first emergency-use applications,

- capacity to integrate future immersive technologies,
- responsiveness to stakeholder consultation outcomes,
- and willingness to collaborate within a community-focused, not-for-profit framework.

Think Digital will work collaboratively with Rotary, emergency service representatives, veterinary professionals, wildlife organisations, and other stakeholders throughout the development lifecycle to ensure the platform remains practical, operationally relevant, and fit for purpose.

The proposed development partnership includes:

- stakeholder consultation workshops,
- operational workflow analysis,
- UX/UI design,
- backend infrastructure development,
- CMS implementation,
- iOS and Android deployment,
- secure authentication systems,
- pilot testing support,
- future VR/AR integration capability,
- and long-term technical maintenance and scalability planning.

Importantly, the development process will remain iterative and consultation-driven, ensuring frontline responder feedback continues shaping the platform throughout development, rollout, and future expansion.

12. Rotary Alignment

The project reflects Rotary values through:

- community service,
- humanitarian impact,
- innovation,
- collaboration,
- public safety,
- sustainable long-term benefit.

The initiative also creates opportunities for:

- national Rotary collaboration,
- community fundraising,
- public awareness campaigns,
- partnerships with emergency and animal welfare sectors.

Rotary's leadership role will ensure strong governance, community trust, and long-term stewardship of the initiative.

13. Future Stewardship, Governance & Sustainability

To ensure the Rotary First Responder App delivers long-term community benefit beyond its initial development phase, a dedicated not-for-profit governance framework is proposed. The project vision extends beyond a standalone application, establishing a sustainable national and future global platform supporting emergency responder safety, animal welfare, and community resilience.

The proposed long-term custodian of the platform will be a separate not-for-profit foundation, established as an Australian Company Limited by Guarantee. This structure has been identified as the most appropriate model for:

- national operations,
- international partnerships,
- stewardship of intellectual property,
- eligibility for grants and philanthropic funding,
- and future international expansion without restructuring.

The foundation will operate as an independent not-for-profit entity with all financial surpluses reinvested into:

- ongoing app development,
- content expansion,
- responder training resources,
- system maintenance,
- research,
- and future innovation.

Governance oversight will be provided through a multidisciplinary board comprising representatives from:

- Rotary,
- emergency services,
- veterinary and wildlife sectors,
- technology and cybersecurity experts,
- and community stakeholders.

The app will operate under a controlled proprietary licence, restricting access to verified emergency services personnel and authorised organisations only. This ensures the platform remains purpose-specific, operationally secure, and aligned with its humanitarian objectives. Participating agencies will manage user access internally, while the foundation maintains overarching governance and compliance oversight.

Long-term financial sustainability will be supported through a hybrid funding model combining:

- Rotary and philanthropic fundraising,
- grants,
- strategic government and NGO partnerships,

- and cost-recovery organisational subscriptions.

Importantly, subscription arrangements will not operate for commercial profit. Instead, tiered organisation-based contributions will ensure accessibility for smaller volunteer agencies while helping fund ongoing support, hosting, and platform improvement.

Rotary's continuing involvement will provide trusted stewardship, advocacy, fundraising capability, and global partnership opportunities. Rotary clubs and districts may also assist with local implementation, awareness campaigns, and future expansion into other jurisdictions.

This governance and stewardship model ensures the project remains sustainable, community-focused, operationally relevant, and capable of delivering long-term benefits to emergency responders, communities, and animal welfare outcomes both within Australia and potentially internationally.