

The Secretary, Economy and Infrastructure Committee

27/2/2017

Parliament House, Spring Street

East Melbourne Vic 3002

RE : INQUIRY INTO RSPCA VICTORIA

USE OF POWERS

- See comrie report - recommendation 21 - ‘That RSPCA Victoria, while continuing its legitimate advocacy role, discontinue its’ public activist campaigning against the existing laws of this state.’
- Re recommendation 21 and “activism” within RSPCA
 - a) See RSPCA website as of 23/1/17
 - “If you’re not adopting from the RSPCA....., then its important you don’t buy from a pet shop,....”

“We want the state government to introduce a policy to end intensive breeding practices of companion animals in Victoria.”

Pet stores selling puppies and kittens with appropriate permits is legal in Victoria. (Victorian upper house parliamentary review tabled 5/12/16, finding 22, “shutting down pet shops would lead to less scrutiny of animal welfare issues” and recommendation 9, “that the government allow pet shops to continue to sell domestic animals from ethical domestic animal breeders”

Breeding dogs with appropriate permits is legal in Victoria.

Clearly RSPCA have taken no heed of recommendation 21. RSPCA Victoria continues its public activist campaigning against the existing laws of this state. NB ‘We want the State government to....’

If RSPCA will NOT listen to, or act on, recommendations of its’ own internal review, then who will it listen to? What must be done to make it listen? We request this inquiry answer these questions.

- b) Niel Comrie defines advocacy and activism. He notes an inappropriate and damaging shift in actions within RSPCA to increasingly include political activism. Where has this political activism stemmed from?

Has there been any internal RSPCA response to recommendation 21?

Is RSPCA aware of the level of membership of its’ employees, volunteers, and senior management to

Animals Australia?

Oscars Law?

Other animal rights and activist groups?

If so, then these results should be published and open to public scrutiny

If not, how can RSPCA ascertain the extent of ‘hijacking’ or infiltration of the organisation by these groups, potentially resulting in the damaging political “activism” Niel Comrie refers to?

Has RSPCA developed new policy, recommendations or guidelines to staff based on recommendation 21?

Have staff been informed of this shift?

Do any new penalties apply to staff who engage in political activism, outside the new directives?

If not WHY NOT? We request this inquiry answer these questions.

- Is the previously trusted name of RSPCA being subversively used and damaged by animal rights groups? Neil Comrie refers to the damage of political activism as “harmful to the organisation in both reputational and operational terms”.
- RSPCA is now perceived by many as anti-animal ownership or/anti pet ownership. An animal rights group in USA (PETA) posts on its website ...”we believe that it would have been in the animals’ best interests if the institution of “pet keeping” never existed.” This ridiculous line of thinking highlights the dangers of aligning with animal rights groups.
- Perhaps RSPCA has chosen itself to alter policy direction and engage in political activism. In relation to RSPCA’s own stated objectives, Comrie comments “Significantly, there is no indication in these objectives that the RSPCA will engage in direct activism.”

FUNDING

Given RSPCA is funded by both private donations, and government funding, is it possible individuals and all taxpayers are now unknowingly supporting extremist animal rights groups, operating subversively under the banner of RSPCA? Or, supporting an RSPCA that is behaving in a similar manner to these groups.

RSPCA received \$5 million resulting from July 2015 legislation. We request the expenditure of these funds be made publicly available allowing scrutiny of spending of taxpayer funds.

OUTCOMES

- We trust this inquiry will ask these questions, gain answers, and assist in redirecting RSPCA back to its own stated objective of advocacy. (Comrie commented “To the independent observer, these objectives convey the impression that the RSPCA is to be involved in advocacy, education, awareness, support, encouragement, providing animal welfare services and relief in the interest of animal welfare”. If this inquiry finds RSPCA has not responded in any meaningful way to the Comrie report recommendation 21, that it finds same, exerting whatever pressure it can on RSPCA Victoria to understand/re-understand its role, and “discontinue its public activist campaigning against the existing laws of this state.”
- We trust this inquiry will hold RSPCA to account, making public its position on these issues and questions, so that government and the community are informed and aware, as they are the providers of funding on which the RSPCA’s very existence depends. We all have a right to know the agenda of the organisation we are donating to, particularly when its actions are in conflict with its published objectives

Greg and Mary Kirby, Upmarket Pets [REDACTED]