

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 5 March 2017 4:51 PM
To: RSPCA Victoria Inquiry
Subject: Preposterous Cruelty Prosecutions.

Submission to Parliament of Victoria inquiry into RSPCA 6/3/17
 from
 Michael Oakes, [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Dear Economy and Infrastructure Committee Members and Staff,

Re this inquiry: I think one important outcome should be:
 ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT BODY WITH VETO POWER FOR PURPOSE OF ASSESSING THE MERITS OF ANY
 PROPOSED PROSECUTIONS FOR ALLEGED ANIMAL CRUELTY IN VICTORIA.

Purpose is to stop preposterous prosecutions which serve little or no useful purpose and may result in pointless
 considerable expense and distress for those targeted especially and others - sometimes including their families and
 creditors. Usually with impunity and no personal cost to bullies launching prosecution. This would require
 appropriate legislation and regulations.

One target is inappropriate RSPCA prosecutions but would also apply to similar type ones lodged by the Dept of
 Primary Industries or whatever the latest name for successor body (currently Agriculture Victoria again - part of
 DEDJTR), the police and maybe some other organisations. I gather re investigating and possible action on alleged
 animal cruelty issues to farm animals in Victoria, especially when more than about 10 head are involved, the DPI or
 whatever rather than the RSPCA usually looks into it.

This Animal Cruelty Prosecution Assessment Committee would include representatives nominated by RSPCA, Dept
 of Ag /DPI or whatever,
 Police and other appropriate organisations. Including Victorian
 Farmers' Federation, Australian Veterinary Association, Law Institute, Justice Department and others. Best keep
 influence of radical animal
 rights organisations as low as possible. Justice Dept representation
 interest largely in reducing clogging of overloaded court system with costly and unproductive humbug. Probably if it
 comes to close votes as to whether a proposed prosecution goes ahead, the organisation proposing it should not
 have a vote in maybe a secret ballot. Or at least leave the room before show of hands type poll to minimise possible
 pecuniary interest in any particular prosecution

Obviously one area of activity by the RSPCA at times has been political lobbying pushing views of those widely
 regarded as extremists. Undoubtedly you will receive submissions detailing some of these from others having
 detailed knowledge that I don't. However, reckon is important to remember that activists may try to use successful
 preposterous prosecutions to help push their own political lobbying agendas .

Some prosecutions for alleged animal cruelty seem well justified if the cruelty turns out to be deliberate or due to
 inexcusable gross neglect. However, there are many where adverse animal welfare issues have occurred largely due
 to factors beyond the control of the accused. Members of this Prosecution Assessment Committee or whatever
 should carefully look at details of all proposed prosecutions to ensure that some useful purpose is served by them
 and especially avoid considerable adverse effects many preposterous ones cause.

Important they do some investigations of their own, especially checking other sides of story. Not just accept what
 told by those wishing to prosecute. Seems if most farmers reckon a prosecution for alleged cruelty to farm animals is

not justified, most likely it would not be. From experience they largely have a good idea on reasonable expectations. Including a realisation that there is often what could be regarded as worse cruelty in nature.

Remember that photos used by prosecution of alleged animal welfare problems sometimes depict things looking far worse than they actually are. Have heard of instances of the types of bullies trying hard to get successful prosecutions using techniques to gain footage that looks as bad as possible. Including the angles photos are taken from.

I will outline some examples of preposterous prosecutions from my own direct experiences and stories come across from elsewhere. However, think you need to hear firsthand from some victims of them for whom the consequences -especially financial ones have often been devastating. A major result for those prosecuting has been an apparent achievement and boost to ego of bullies effectively using public resources to unjustly persecute people, usually with impunity to themselves.

POSSIBLE HEARINGS BY COMMITTEE

I gather your committee is like others in the past and may hold meetings with interested people sometime after consideration of submissions if deemed appropriate. Re preposterous prosecutions in Victoria, I could probably convince at least a couple more victims to appear if not too much time or travelling is involved. Probably needs advertisements in areas hearings are held to try and attract others with possibly useful stories to tell but are very unlikely to put them in writing because of time and effort involved.

MY OWN CASE

I am a farmer in [REDACTED] area. In 2005, among stock I had on the place on agistment was a mob of Damara sheep. These are a meat breed which shed their wool. Are much more stupid than normal sheep. Often very difficult to muster and get to run through gates. The owner, son of neighbour and former employee of mine was working on oil rigs off WA, had a house in Melbourne and only occasionally visited here.

In July 2005, not long after he drenched them, for which I only helped get in yard as he had two other assistants, they started dying rapidly in a severe cold snap with icy wind and misty rain combined. Paddock feed was down due to drought but with round oaten hay bales there at all times, at least as good as previous year when there had been no problems. Long story short: DPI vet took gut samples from a couple of dead ones. Sent them to laboratory, which found high levels of worm infestation. Something I had not considered a possibility so soon after drenching. Did not make sense to me. Only found much later from owners statement for court case that drench was for liver fluke only. Am sure if any fluke infestation, it would have been at low level not worth drenching for.

Re caring for these sheep, would have bought more hay rings so could have fed them round hay bales more efficiently if had cash available.

Could have largely stopped greedy ones climbing on bales - and shitting worm eggs on them which others ate. However, at that stage, owner owed me for six months agistment. Higher priority at time was chasing another larger total amount outstanding for much longer from a dairy cocky for some hay sold. Only successful after heavy pestering just before monthly milk payment.

Re how worms got on my property, think it was via ram brought in by former employee to put over a few ewes of his. I had been pestering him for months to get them off the place. Maybe he wasn't trying hard but with widespread drought conditions, is often difficult to find anywhere else to put them.

Anyway DPI alleged that I had failed to provide sufficient feed and other care. Seems they never noticed sheep had access at all times to hay and better grass in paddock over channel which they didn't look at and about which the magistrate maybe dismissed my explanation of as a tall story. The problems would not have occurred if not for lack of worm drenching, which was not my responsibility.

Did not notice sheep going backwards in condition early because of numerous other problems. For a start, two part time workers normally available were not and two others supposed to come kept putting it off and finally didn't. Had I anticipated this, may have otherwise found another assistant.

Did not give sheep - and a lot of other things attention I would have liked. Earlier, spent a lot of time giving some weaned too small agisted calves extra feed. Was time consuming and difficult to segregate them from healthy ones not needing it. Also, regarding mob of agisted steers on another block, needed several very time consuming attempts to get two rogues that kept jumping fences out onto the road into a truck to abattoirs. (Not unusual problem with big long legged Friesians but rare with other breeds. This was in addition to normal jobs including feeding hay and silage daily to cattle mobs.

Was very annoying having officious DPI vet, he late [REDACTED] talking down at me in condescending manner with aid of hindsight and not comprehending full story. Especially from government employee for who if things got too hectic, could have probably taken stress leave and left others to deal with problems. I was exhausted and had nowhere near enough time to properly care for everything I would have liked in short winter days and without badly needed helpers when had been having time consuming problems. Re [REDACTED] question "Why didn't you get veterinary advice earlier?" Private vet fees can be very costly and often you cannot be sure will be worth it for what consultations achieve. Then as person who called vet, would be responsible for ensuring they get paid. Was very reluctant to do this while very short of money and with owner of animals already a long way behind with agistment money owed.

Anyway, after sheep were drenched for worms and deaths largely stopped after loss of about 100 head out of 400, which at the rate they had bred, still left more than there had been the previous year, I fed them oats and good hay to build them up again for about the next 8 months, when owner sold them. At extra cost to me of more than total I had received for agistment earlier because thought somehow I was responsible. Had not yet found that earlier drench owner gave was only for fluke, not worms.

COURT HEARING

Government vet [REDACTED] and an animal health officer came to check on sheep after they had gone. Much later, IN June 2006 not much short of an apparent 12 month statute of limitations on laying charges, was served a summons for about half a dozen preposterous charges for things like cruelty, aggravated cruelty etc - largely to two individual sheep that had died. Engaged lawyer [REDACTED] who has operated at Shepparton Court for many years to organise defence.

This case eventually was run in Shepparton Magistrates Court on 19th and 20th Feb 2007. Note resources DPI put into attending court without considering those earlier going into preparation and officers driving around in government vehicles. DPI prosecutor [REDACTED] from Mornington office, DPI vet [REDACTED] from Tatura office, DPI Animal Health Officer [REDACTED] from Cobram office who sat around court foyer for two days in case needed as witness but was not called. Also bullying Animal Health Officer [REDACTED], who had nothing to do with case but was spectator in court for two days.

Presumably getting paid by government for this as entertainment instead of doing something useful like "nipping" potential animal welfare problems "in the bud". On the second day also attending were Regional Animal Health Officer [REDACTED] and Regional DPI Vet [REDACTED] from Benalla Office. Imagine what this was effectively costing the government!

Regarding the general attitude of the DPI officers around which would apply to RSPCA too, [REDACTED] remarked to me: "They don't care!"

- regarding undeserved damage and distress done to people by their organisations. Just want successful prosecutions. Probably these usually help make them look good to their superiors and some others. Wonder if unjustified prosecutions contributed to an award I saw somewhere that [REDACTED] received. Recall was Public Service Medal.

MAGISTRATE

I later figured out probably a major improper reason for those from Benalla attending on second day. It seems sometimes a major factor in determining which way court cases go is the magistrate or judge presiding. A couple of people commented to me that if I got John Murphy, should be right because he has a farm and understands. However magistrate was Jenny Grubissa, who I knew nothing about at the time.

Anyway, she was only on the court circuit around Shepparton for a limited period. Had been working Melbourne beforehand and went back there later. Apparently had been a court defence lawyer before being appointed a magistrate at a very young age. Appears strong credential may have been being mate of wife of then [REDACTED]. Also seems developed a reputation for sending men to jail on very flimsy pretexts. I still have copy of a detailed blog found after doing a Google search on her long ago with some stories about her behaviour as a magistrate. Seem consistent with my experience.

About 5 months after court hearing, still no word of when any decision would be delivered. Also, I heard claims that Jenny Grubissa was also months behind in handing down decisions on other cases she had heard. I thought it appropriate to draw this to attention of then Chief Magistrate Ian Gray, who more recently moved to a maybe lower pressure job as State Coroner. Reply from him to the effect that he would prod her to get on with mine. She almost certainly became aware it was me who drew attention to her work not done, which she was probably reprimanded for. So probably tried to hit me as hard as she could while keeping decision unlikely to be worth appealing.

Also, regarding her background, found that before attending uni in Melbourne and becoming a lawyer, Jenny Grubissa grew up and attended school in Benalla. Likely she stayed with parents or other relatives there while working in area. Most importantly, likely she knew [REDACTED], who attended court partly hoping their presence would sway her decision.

This decision was delivered in August 2007, six months after the hearing. Found me guilty on half a dozen preposterous charges. Sentenced to 8 months jail suspended for two years. Had she tried giving me a custodial sentence, would have immediately lodged an appeal and sure it would have been overturned. No fine, but close to \$5,000 in costs against me. This was in addition to \$7,000 I paid [REDACTED]. Then another \$800 later on legal advice re possible appeal.

With other expenses I had also incurred, including not asking for agistment money for sheep in the several months between when deaths occurred and owner sold them, and providing extra feed, particularly a lot of oats to help restore condition on them. This whole episode would have cost me over \$20,000 due to a combination of circumstances of which actions and/or inactions by others were very important.

Not after court decision I had another agistment disaster. Nominal owner of Friesian cattle from Deniliquin NSW area, including mob with fence jumpers mentioned earlier was declared bankrupt. Had a lot of his cattle on- which were effectively owned by stock mortgagees. Also an elaborate mess with another bloke later declared bankrupt supposedly leasing some of these cattle. These muddlers and others hang around together!) Promises to pay agistment and remove many of them did not eventuate. I was using irrigation water that otherwise could have been sold at very high prices on temporary market on permanent pasture to keep up feed to them in a drought. After he repeatedly would not answer his phone or return calls from me, I had 35 grown Friesian heifers dumped in Deniliquin saleyards consigned to agent who had a stock mortgage on them. This agent, [REDACTED] had been rude to me. Soon after I found [REDACTED] of Deniliquin also had a large stock mortgage in lieu of payment for a deep bore on farming property that had since been sold by mortgagees. [REDACTED] and I worked out a deal regarding the remaining cattle. Estimated cost me around \$20,000 overall compare to if a lot of cattle had been removed earlier as originally promised, agistment paid and irrigation water sold instead of used.

Eventually with more lean seasons after these losses, I was forced to reluctantly sell 30 megalitres of permanent water for catch up with cash outgoings..

Nominal owner of cattle above did some of the things that cause problems that landholders are often wrongly blamed for effects of. Including putting many more animals in than said they would in a drought after reluctant agreement to allow them in. Then had weak animals getting bogged in mud in empty irrigation channels, with the odd one dying before being found.

After court outcome and some consideration, I lodged notice of appeal to the Shepparton County Court. Thought could do a better job of presenting case. A bit more work into it myself and better approaches that some of those

used. Also, I seemed to think on different lines at times from his and did not help with him constantly distracted with phone ringing and people wanting to see him in court foyer when we should have been conferring.

Through mates was referred to Melbourne barrister to run appeal. Visited him in his office and he had a thorough look at all the details of case. Decided we would not run it after he reckoned could probably have most of the preposterous charges dismissed but less the 50% chance of quashing all of them. Problem was that if one still held for maybe even some minor technical reason, I would still be liable for all the court costs, estimated at over \$20,000.

Economically unviable and not worth the risk.

Another difficulty was that a star witness needed, who I did not have at first hearing, a former local farmer who had agisted sheep on my property but since moved to Grenfell, NSW. Would have been costly and difficult for him to attend Shepparton Court.

So paid what he asked for his time and advice. \$800. A lot less than for more time and travelling to Shepp though. Maybe more justifiable with him having to rent very costly office space near city courts than , who only has office at home near Murchison.

I went along to County Court representing myself with, on advice from court officer, brief reasons in writing on why appeal was withdrawn.

Judge accepted this. Was at least one other appeal withdrawn that day because after close consideration was also deemed uneconomic by bloke I talked to outside court.

Some dirty tactics against me were tried by DPI Prosecutor, , who very early would have figured I was unlikely to plead guilty to his preposterous charges. Maybe his listing of a witness from the laboratory which found high worm levels in gut samples from sheep was a tactic. This bloke had since moved to Adelaide and his travel expenses to attend court would have been very high - and probably against me unless all charges dismissed. got this stopped. I regarded evidence he was to present as correct within range of probabilities and nothing to contest.

It is widely recognised that comments made before any during a court hearing should be limited so as to not prejudice the chance of a fair trial. Is often easy to get people "fired up" on hearing allegations that may grossly misrepresent the overall situation so that they are sometimes very reluctant to listen to, let alone properly consider other sides of the story. Then sometimes they join in on the mud slinging act. Anyway, a young journalist from the Shepparton News, attended on the first day. Apparently had long talk to outside court. Next day (Tuesday), his beat up allegations against me covered the front page. I later found that the Editor had been away and "wet behind the ears" relatively inexperienced staff had deemed this the leading news item. In Wednesday issue, day only a small space on Page 5 was devoted to my defence information.

On the Tuesday morning in court, after waving Shepparton News around, managed to get into the witness box and gave him a grilling. Magistrate Grubissa said it was she alone who would make the decision and insinuated she was not influenced by what I reckon was blatant contempt of court..

However, in marginal cases, I reckon outcome could be swayed by obvious public expectations. Even if this is strongly influenced by "fake news". (A phenomenon currently attracting media attention!)

SOME OTHER ALLEGED ANIMAL CRUELTY CASES

I think something like the following happened 1n 1990: Government vet joined Tatura Veterinary Clinic and soon after, , who had been there a long time and it seems was pushed out joined the Department. , an officious type was also involved in probably many other preposterous alleged prosecutions. Re one woman he and other bullying Animal Health Officer had been had been harassing in around 2005, : Apparently after sneaking onto property deliberately choosing times she was not home needed an official warning not too. Her husband had bipolar and had served in the army. With what they had done to her with a previous preposterous prosecution (animal welfare problems seemed not her fault with calves involved that died apparently having been infected with salmonella before she acquired them), was serious risk he

would have killed them if in the wrong mood. Then gather there was another prosecution regarding sick horses. She claimed someone who had altercations with her had thrown feed containing Rumensin over the fence. It helps improve feed utilisation in cattle and probably other ruminants but is very toxic to horses and can easily cause death or long term damage.

█ has been prosecuted more recently in 2011 at least for running a puppy farm. Having visited the property long ago, I know it was untidy and with lots of rubbish lying around but doubt if conditions for dogs were anywhere near as bad as DPI portrayed.

Re █, think your committee should hear a story first hand from a then dairy farmer █. Around 2005 was buying bobby calves a few days old of types not worth rearing for slaughter. Bullied into pleading guilty of things like failing to provide food and water which cost him several thousand dollars after truck meant to pick up calves from holding yards on property around 3km from dairy and take them to Cobram abattoir did not and DPI found out before he did next day.

Is worth remembering that one type of bully is small blokes with "little man syndrome". Those who after probably being bullied themselves by others bigger and stronger take the opportunity to be bullies themselves against targets not likely to put up a strong fight back. Seems █ is probably a classic example of this. Especially for intimidating people who are unfamiliar with details of their rights against attempted prosecutions and how the legal system works.

This is an interesting characteristic to check regarding officials in positions with some authority. A couple of years ago, a cop of probably minimum police height - who didn't last long as sergeant in charge of small local country police station twice tried to strongly lay down some supposed laws to me according to him regarding a particular matter. Subordinate cops present each time appeared somewhat embarrassed. Any more from him and I would have contacted Area Inspector and/or Police ethical standards. Needs people such as in proposed committee or whatever to keep over zealous animal welfare enforcers who behave like this cop did under control.

█ This is a case that I think should be examined as a possible classic example of a gross miscarriage of justice that has occurred due to lack of checks and balances regarding animal cruelty prosecutions.

Anyway █, a farmer of █ near Benalla was charged with animal cruelty offences re some sheep. Pleading guilty in court in Sept 2015. Was fined \$50,000 and not meant to have custody of animals for 5 years. Some time earlier, I had sat beside █ at a Vic Farmers Federation Dinner meeting function. Refuse to believe he could be held responsible for atrocities which deserved such a penalty. eg. Having apparently been a fire brigade captain for 12 years should have realistic ideas on community standards.

After seeing report in paper, which did not name who it applied to, rang █ to find more info, initially thinking it involved someone else from his area. Did not manage to figure out story with what I could find from █, but seemed to me it was probably largely at least things that happened on his property due to actions and/or inactions by others. Also, there may have been some skulduggery against him after views he promoted re Lake Mokoan, which was recently decommissioned. Possibly most importantly, he may have had little contact with the legal system and was bluffed into thinking it could be easier and cheaper to plead guilty with likelihood of a lesser penalty than being found guilty after putting time and money into contesting the charges.

STUART FAIRLIE

One notable exception of impunity running out for an apparent bullying law enforcement officer was re RSPCA inspector Stuart Fairlie, murdered around May 1989. I have some comments on this incident that looking at news items on it available on Internet do not reveal.

Fairlie was an RSPCA inspector based at Geelong. Was found buried in a shallow grave in a forest near Mortlake with his RSPCA badge on top of it in May 1989. Seemed obvious that whoever put him there did so because of strong objections to his actions under auspices of RSPCA.

Police managed to have Len Squires, a farmer with horses whose place he had been visiting convicted of his murder. This was later quashed and no one else has ever been charged. Apparently even Fairlie's relatives reckoned it wasn't Len Squires.

Police may have been out to persecute Mr Squires for other reasons.

He had to go public after his acquittal to embarrass police involved into returning personal possessions of his, including boots that had been seized as possible evidence. I remember seeing a letter to the Editor from him on this. Think was in Weekly Times.

One very important aspect of this case is I remember seeing interviewed on TV a bloke who obviously knew a fair bit about dirty unjustified things Fairlie had done to some people. Had the guts to publicly state to the effect of with what Fairlie had been doing, what happened to him was not surprising.

Apparently Stuart Fairlie was an RSPCA inspector in England before coming to Australia. I recently joined a closed Facebook group "RSPCA VICTIM SUPPORT", initially not realising it was UK, not Australian based. See on it have also been the same sort of preposterous prosecutions over there. Most likely worse than in Australia. To the extent that even lawyers who specialise in defending against RSPCA prosecutions have been mentioned. Aware of tactics they use and ways of countering them.

I am considering asking on the site if anyone knows of uncomplimentary stories about Stuart Fairlie from around 35 years ago. Would not surprise me if something comes up. Even maybe a possibility he fled to Australia due to possible retaliation on behalf of some victim of his. Rather like something I have seen first hand that an ex police officer first pointed out to me: ie Cops that have been tough but fair doing their job can - and often do stay in same country town they worked in before resigning or retiring. However, some types of bad ones usually go interstate and a long way away. Are otherwise at serious risk of having honest citizens and /or other cops who worked under them who had unjustified dirty things done to them take every opportunity to kick them if not at excessive cost to themselves. Even many years later.

eg I am one of those who would still like to have a piece of a local police sergeant who left this area for Qld over 20 years ago. For me re a very dirty basically illegal thing I found he had earlier done to me after he had gone.

I don't know details of any prosecutions Stuart Fairlie initiated.

However it seems some significant ones would have been vetoed by the likes of the proposed committee. He would have been restrained from doing dirty things that led someone to take drastic action to stop.

Obviously there are others like him still launching preposterous cruelty charges who need to be curbed.

OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Re preposterous prosecutions and other animal welfare issues involving RSPCA and areas of Dept of Ag equivalents in other jurisdictions, obviously there have also been things that need fixing. Maybe your committee can get ideas looking at legislation and regulations enacted elsewhere. I am not up with latest details. However, remember that in NSW there was a very serious conflict of interest several years ago with the law firm of then State President of the RSPCA having a contract to handle prosecutions for alleged animal cruelty.

Also, there were some terrible prosecutions. I remember reports many years ago about the NSW RSPCA spending almost as much as their annual income from the State Government unsuccessfully trying to prosecute a farming couple over alleged cruelty to sheep during a drought. Kept trying again in more costly higher courts. Later their victims sold up, never recovering after outlaying large amounts of money and time to defend themselves.

There are normally only small longer term profit margins in most farming activities when things go overall reasonably well. This includes getting through droughts and other bad periods. On farms it is necessary to spend money to make money both on maybe immediate expenses such as buying breeding animals or usually non urgent ones including periodic machinery upgrading. Re preposterous animal cruelty charges, there may have already been significant losses due to issues involved before being added to with a lot of costly unproductive humbug of court proceedings.

This can seriously affect the long term viability of a farming operation with from loss of funds that otherwise would have been put back into farm. The problem may be compounded because low productivity and income gives a poor financial track record which makes it more difficult to obtain loans for productive purposes.

Meanwhile are usually minimal repercussions for the bullies who persisted in the prosecutions effectively using government money.

Shows need for government imposed checks and balances to minimise likelihood of such waste.

One NSW case I have seen a lot of detail on was that of Ruth Downey, on a farm long held by her family and owned outright in Pilliga area west of Narrabri. Also talked on phone with her once while she was still there. In drought over 10 years ago, RSPCA and DPI or whatever, with backup of police shot Jersey cows she was handfeeding and rearing calves on. Obviously totally unjustified, as they apparently had to chase after some animals at gallop to shoot them. Maybe fair enough shooting ones too weak to stand but certainly not these.

Seems those attending may have known a bit about beef cattle but were grossly ignorant regarding dairy types. The latter, especially Jerseys can look very scrawny by comparison while in acceptable condition. Especially when being milked or feeding calves. Good dairy cows are strongly inclined to produce lots of milk rather than improve in body condition themselves even when feed is good.

Last bit of information I saw on Ruth that she was financially forced off farm due to this criminal action by the RSPCA, living in Tamworth and they were still sending her letters of demand for something like \$700,000 allegedly owing. There were also other cases of RSPCA bullying single women when they would be obviously more reluctant to take on people more likely to put up a strong fight.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND COSTS FROM BULLYING.

Your committee should keep in mind that for people with some underlying susceptibility to any mental health type issues, extra stresses can turn them into major problems. These are often kept somewhat hidden by patient confidentiality obligations. Also details behind suicides tend to be hushed up. Including those of farmers experiencing difficult times. Would not surprise me if there have been some suicides when the last straw has been preposterous animal cruelty charges pending.

Stresses from unjustified harassment - including for alleged animal cruelty can cause or aggravate lots of lesser health problems which also cost in time, money and distress. eg I gather soon after the first time [REDACTED] was charged - which appeared preposterous, she was taken to hospital in an ambulance after a panic attack.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY AWARENESS

Some adverse animal welfare issues are at least partly due to lack of money and/or other resources which may be a result of it. Also, the animal welfare issues may result in considerable loss or expense that otherwise would not have been incurred. Things can be made much worse by additional cost resulting from cruelty prosecutions which may not be justified.

Re this sort of thing is a very important point: Many people who have been well off all of their lives often do not seem to some comprehend problems of those dealing with difficulties. Including getting out of financial and other ruts. However, there are some prosperous people who after having previously experienced hard times first hand are very conscious of it. Unfortunately this does not include many such as some magistrates, judges, politicians and animal welfare enforcement officers.

Re politicians, remember comments former Federal Treasurer Joe Hockey made directed at young people in general before he retired?

Condescending advice regarding "get a good job" etc from someone with a privileged background which just showed he had little idea on how "the other half" lives. Influence of his type among politicians and bureaucrats who frame laws needs curbing. Likewise for over zealous animal welfare officers and magistrates. Don't want them pleased with themselves and smugly think they taught an alleged offender a lesson with a heavy penalty which on close examination by reasonable people appears totally unjustified. However, unfortunately other sides of the story are rarely properly publicly revealed in subsequent news reports quoting officials involved. One area that has applied to is animal cruelty prosecutions.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Seems that facing court proceedings is usually most distressing to people that have not experienced it before. Often informed advice and moral support they badly need is also lacking. Also, they are usually against experienced prosecutors who sometimes try dirty intimidatory tricks. At other extreme, once went along to court when a bloke I had

worked with who was expecting to be sent to jail for 3 months after a parole breach type of incident. Was organised with bag packed etc. His not being sent to jail, which I expected was in one way a let down for him as he had hoped for some dental work done at government expense.

Anyway, hopefully government actions as a result of your inquiry recommendations will curtail those whose jobs supposedly include improving animal welfare and minimising cruelty but sometimes grossly misuse resources available to themselves for this. In shorter term, I am interested in whether your committee will conduct hearings to talk with people who may be able to provide more information or answer important questions. Presume this will probably only be decided after considering whether or not submissions and other sources have provided enough information for the report you have been commissioned to provide to Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Oakes

PS. I apologise for this email server apparently having a mind of its own. On successive drafts while writing this, edited it so roughly equal number of total letters on each line, It was disarranged again when drafts retrieved. Appears you doing a final tidy up may be desirable before publishing it on website for public viewing.