

### Appendix 3: Advocacy at RSPCA Victoria

#### What does RSPCA Victoria mean by advocacy?

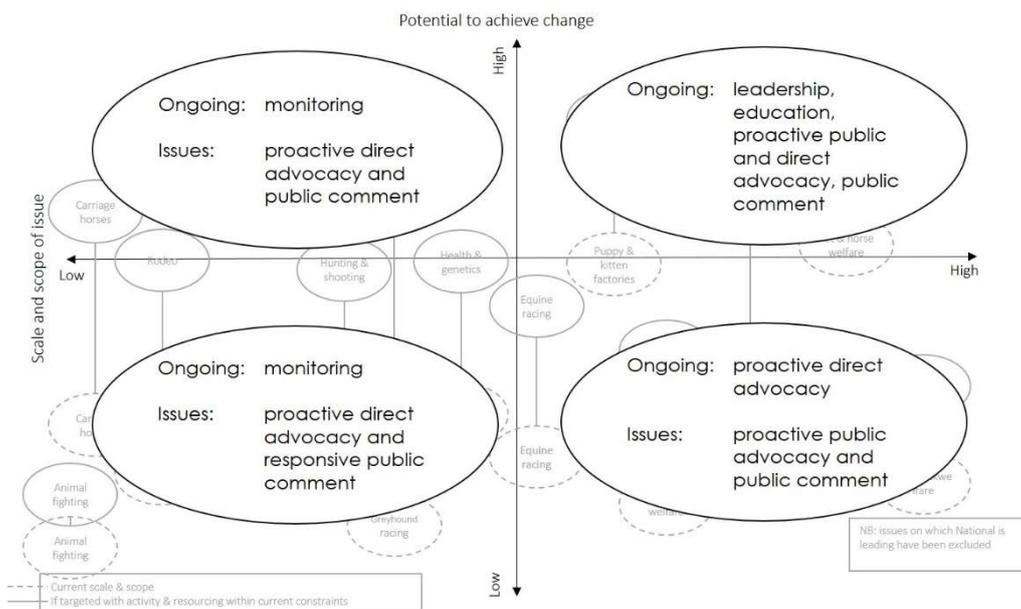
Advocacy is the process of influencing those whose policy decisions impact on animals' lives, as well as those whose who influence the policy decision-makers. In the animal welfare context, the decision-makers are generally government, regulators and industry, and other influencers include industry (where they are not the decision-makers), media, interest groups, peak bodies, other non-government organisations and the community.

Effective advocacy relies on building and maintaining strong relationships, to ensure RSPCA Victoria is at the table when decisions are being contemplated or made. If necessary, advocacy also involves holding decision-makers accountable, by calling out harmful law, policy or practice.

#### When does RSPCA Victoria advocate?

RSPCA Victoria advocates to bring about changes in policy and practice that improve welfare and contribute to our vision of ending cruelty to all animals.

Given the breadth of animal welfare issues in modern society, it is essential that RSPCA Victoria prioritises its advocacy effort. Issues are prioritised in line with scale and scope of the problem (i.e. the degree of harm to individual animals or the number of total animals involved, or both), and the potential for change on that issue. The sample matrix below illustrates how issues are prioritised, and advocacy conducted in each priority category.



#### How does RSPCA Victoria advocate?

Developing a clear understanding of the stakeholder and decision-making landscape is central to good advocacy practice.

In a general sense, this includes maintaining a strong working knowledge of who will make decisions on which issues, and how those decisions will be made (such as understanding political, parliamentary and government processes). It also involves monitoring the range of views and influences on key issues through continual scanning and regular contact with key decision-makers and influencers.

The table overleaf outlines the principles by which RSPCA Victoria advocates on specific issues, and how these principles are applied in practice.

Principle	Practice
Be fully informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use thorough research to ensure that decision or policies, and all their related implications, are well understood by reviewing RSPCA policies, other animal welfare science and credible research, related policies, laws and regulations, current practice, and the impact of similar decisions in other jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Identify all stakeholders, the nature of their interest, their level of influence on the decision-makers, their likely position on the issue, and how they might be positively or negatively impacted by any decision made.</li> <li>• Meet face-to-face with as many ‘allies’ and ‘opponents’ as possible to develop a deeper understanding of their views and likely action on the issue.</li> </ul>
Lead with policy and evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base all positions and representations to stakeholders on RSPCA policy.</li> <li>• If no relevant policy is available, or the policy is ambiguous, base positions and representations on other reliable evidence, and align them with RSPCA Victoria’s vision and purpose.</li> <li>• Always represent policy, evidence and facts as such, and distinguish them from hypotheses and opinion.</li> </ul>
Identify a clear position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a clear position on the issue, aligned with RSPCA policy and RSPCA Victoria’s vision and purpose (see ‘Lead with policy and evidence’ above).</li> <li>• Ensure clarity on which elements of the issue are negotiable and which are non-negotiable, and use these to develop optimal and compromise positions.</li> </ul>
Know the risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse all positions and arguments well, and identify all potential weak spots or flaws.</li> <li>• Openly acknowledge shortcomings in the argument and gaps in the evidence if challenged by stakeholders.</li> <li>• Consider and prepare for all likely reputational implications that might arise from the advocacy effort and – in particular – how the organisation or its arguments might be publicly criticized or undermined.</li> </ul>
Respect and value the relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain contact with key stakeholders outside peak advocacy periods, to build a strong foundation for the relationship and make the advocacy task easier when it arises.</li> <li>• Make every effort to identify common ground and mutual goals, including with stakeholders that disagree with RSPCA Victoria’s position on an issue.</li> <li>• Adhere to the highest standards of conduct and courtesy in all direct and indirect communication.</li> </ul>
Maintain integrity and independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSPCA Victoria will always advocate against laws, policies and practices that create undue harm or distress to animals, in line with RSPCA policies.</li> <li>• Where a stakeholder with whom RSPCA Victoria has a relationship takes an action that harms or is likely to harm animals, public and private opposition and criticism should be firm, respectful and measured.</li> </ul>