



6 March 2017

Mr Bernard Finn MLC
Chair
Economic and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Mr Finn

Inquiry into RSPCA Victoria

As one of Australia's oldest and most trusted charities as well as being the nation's leading animal welfare organisation, I am pleased to attach a submission from RSPCA Australia that provides information on the objectives and operations of the RSPCA in Australia against the inquiry terms of reference.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information.

Yours sincerely



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Objectives of the RSPCA

The RSPCA in Australia rose out of a need to improve the lives of the thousands of horses literally being worked to death in the streets of Victoria in the 1870s. It was through RSPCA advocacy (then the Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) that eventually laws were changed for horses and specific legislation aimed at preventing animal cruelty was introduced.

Following the establishment of a Society in Victoria in 1871, other states soon followed: Tasmania in 1872; New South Wales in 1874; South Australia in 1875; Queensland in 1883 and Western Australia in 1892. RSPCA ACT was formed in 1955 followed by Northern Territory in 1965.

The Royal Warrant was issued in the 1920s so each State Society became known as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

RSPCA Australia, the federation of Societies, was formed in 1980 in order to prevent cruelty to animals through actively promoting their care and protection at a national level. We do this by providing a national presence and voice on animal welfare, formulating and disseminating policies on the care, treatment and use of animals and fostering cooperation between RSPCA Societies.

The RSPCA is, and has been since inception, an advocate for animals, working to prevent animal cruelty through education, legislative and policy change. Since the early days it has also received and investigated complaints of cruelty and sought prosecution of animal cruelty cases as well as providing direct care to animals in need. All of these facets of the RSPCA's activities have been reflected in the objectives of the organisations since establishment.

Over the last five years the RSPCA nationally received 656,388 animals into its care, with 45,256 dogs, 55,570 cats, and 36,565 other animals received in 2015-16. All RSPCA Societies are actively working to reduce the number of animals that need direct care by the RSPCA (for example through promoting responsible pet ownership that includes desexing, microchipping, registration, training and appropriate care), and for those that do enter our centres, to rehabilitate and rehome them as quickly as possible. Further information on RSPCA published statistics on animal outcomes is found at <https://www.rspca.org.au/facts/annual-statistics-2015-16/published-statistics>.

The RSPCA firmly grounds its policies, positions and information on the most current animal welfare science. Policies are developed nationally with input from each RSPCA Society Board and are adopted only on the unanimous vote of all Societies. Once adopted, the policies are binding on all RSPCA Societies. RSPCA policies are available on the RSPCA Knowledgebase at <http://kb.rspca.org.au/76/>.

The policy position of the RSPCA on a wide range of animal welfare matters and animal uses has been consistent for decades. For example, as the layer hen industry was intensifying in the 1950s, the RSPCA was raising its concerns with governments and the layer hen industry about the welfare compromises caused by intensive confinement of hens in battery cages. In the early 1980s the RSPCA campaigned against the expansion of the live export trade, strongly recommending that live exports be replaced by a



meat-only trade – a position we still hold firm today. For companion animals, for decades we have led the way, recommending desexing and identification of pets as important components of responsible pet ownership.

We are proud of the extensive advocacy and community awareness and education activities we have undertaken over decades and are committed to improving the ways in which we engage the community and key stakeholders in order to continually advance the welfare of animals. We work directly with individual animal owners, trainers, farmers, businesses and industry groups as well as governments and the broader community to raise public awareness about animal welfare issues and achieve positive change for animals. We also work with governments and animal industries to develop best practice husbandry and management tools as well as contributing to the development of standards and codes of practice. Discussing current and future animal welfare issues in a collaborative manner provides clarity about the RSPCA's views, suggested changes and solutions in order that there are significant and widespread welfare improvements for large numbers of animals.

The RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme aims to improve the lives of as many farm animals as possible and provides a means of leading a consumer-driven change to producing higher welfare food. The RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme has voluntary standards that are at the high end of what is commercially feasible in Australia for the production of layer hens, pigs, meat chickens, turkeys and farmed Atlantic salmon. These Standards are developed based on contemporary animal welfare science, RSPCA policy, best practices overseas and in Australia and with input from farmers, industry organisations, researchers and other interested organisations and individuals. Products from animals that have been raised to RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards can use the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme logo at point of sale, enabling differentiation and marketing of products from RSPCA Approved farms and offering consumers who buy pork, chicken, turkey, salmon and eggs a higher welfare alternative. The RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme is a not for profit program. Royalty payments received from companies marketing their products as RSPCA Approved are used to fund the Scheme and are not used for other activities. More information on the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme including a short video on the impact the Scheme has had on the lives of more than 800 million animals so far can be viewed at <http://www.rspca.org.au/what-we-do/rspca-approved-farming-scheme>.

Enforcement of animal welfare legislation

While the work of the RSPCA is focused on the prevention of animal cruelty, it recognises the importance of enforcement of existing laws in order to provide some protection to animals. RSPCA State Societies (NSW, QLD, SA, TAS, VIC and WA) and RSPCA ACT have a long history of receiving and investigating animal cruelty incidents and complaints and pursuing prosecutions of individuals when such action is appropriate. All commenced this type of activity within the first couple of years from their establishment. RSPCA Inspectors in each of these jurisdictions have powers to enforce state/territory animal welfare laws.

In 2015-16, nationally, the RSPCA investigated 62,714 complaints of animal cruelty, with 12,022 occurring in Victoria. When a cruelty complaint is received, RSPCA Inspectors may respond in a number of ways. They can provide information to the responsible person about animal care; and/or give instructions, for example, that an animal must be seen by a veterinarian within a specific timeframe; they can take an animal into the care of the RSPCA; and/or provide immediate relief from suffering for the animal; they can collect evidence



as it relates to an animal cruelty incident; and they can lay charges in relation to a breach of animal welfare legislation.

Table 1 shows the number of cruelty complaints investigated by the RSPCA between 1 July 2015-30 June 2016. It also shows that when the RSPCA does lay charges, nationally it has a 97% prosecution success rate.

Table 1 Cruelty complaints and prosecutions by state/territory RSPCA for the 2015-2016 financial year

	State/Territory RSPCA ¹							Total
	ACT	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	
Cruelty complaints								
Investigated	2,725	14,953	18,386	5,215	2,941	12,022	6,321	62,714
Cruelty prosecutions								
Prosecutions finalised	15	64	44	58	10	54	19	259
Successful prosecutions ²	15	63	44	56	10	49	16	250
Charges laid	83	490	100	90	34	1,146	24	1,963
People charged	16	111	72	66	11	54	21	345
Cases pending	18	34	57	66	31	36	10	247

¹ RSPCA Darwin does not enforce animal welfare legislation in the Northern Territory

² Facts proved in relation to principal charges

Source: RSPCA Australia Annual Statistics 2015-16 <https://www.rspca.org.au/facts/annual-statistics-2015-16/published-statistics>

For 136 years the RSPCA has demonstrated that it can be an advocate for animals by working to prevent animal cruelty and at the same time investigate incidents of cruelty. We're proud of this dual role and the strong community support we have for both.

Funding of the RSPCA

Nationally, approximately 97% of the RSPCA's annual operating funds derive from the community through donations, fundraising activities, and the delivery of services such as veterinary services, adoption fees, and dog training. The remaining 3% is provided by governments. Nationally, the RSPCA has an operating budget of approximately \$140 million. Approximately \$15 million of this is spent on enforcing State/territory animal welfare laws through RSPCA Inspectorate Services. State and territory governments collectively provide grants of approximately \$4.8million to provide this service.

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