

TRANSCRIPT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Inquiry into the RSPCA Victoria

Melbourne — 31 May 2017

Members

Mr Bernie Finn — Chair

Mr Khalil Eideh — Deputy Chair

Mr Jeff Bourman

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Mr Luke O'Sullivan

Participating members

Mr Greg Barber

Ms Samantha Dunn

Mr Cesar Melhem

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips

Witnesses

Dr Tim Adams, Chief Executive Officer, and

Ms Sylvia Power, Field Officer, Dogs Victoria.

The CHAIR — The committee is hearing evidence today in relation to the inquiry into RSPCA Victoria and the evidence is being recorded. Firstly, welcome to the public hearings of the economy and infrastructure committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Could I ask you to state your name, organisation, position and suburb for the record, and then open up with a 5 minute or 10 minute presentation and then we will let loose with questions.

Dr ADAMS — Certainly. My name is Tim Adams. I am chief executive of Dogs Victoria and we are based in Skye.

Ms POWER — My name is Sylvia Power and I am a field officer with Dogs Victoria.

Dr ADAMS — Dogs Victoria is pleased to appear today before the inquiry into the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. We have provided a detailed written submission to the committee which outlines some concerns and makes a number of recommendations. We appreciate being given the opportunity to appear at this hearing further to discuss the points we have raised and answer any questions that the committee may have.

Dogs Victoria is the peak representative body of pedigree-registered dog owners and breeders in Victoria. The organisation is over 85 years old and represents approximately 10 000 individual members and 280 affiliated breed and kennel clubs.

Dogs Victoria itself is a member of the Australian National Kennel Council, ANKC, and we work closely with sister organisations in other Australian states. We recognise the role of the RSPCA as a statutory authority charged with enforcing the POCTAA and part 4 of the Domestic Animals Act. As the RSPCA deals primarily with domestic animals, we have sought to establish a working relationship with the organisation. It is our view that it is in the interests of both the RSPCA and Dogs Victoria that we collaborate where our members are involved so that we can ensure the best welfare outcomes for the dogs concerned.

Our interest in this inquiry stems from the fact that, with our membership numbers and the many thousands of dogs in their care of our total membership, from time to time animal welfare cases have arisen involving Dogs Victoria members. Thankfully these cases represent a very small proportion of our membership and usually relate to poor education around animal husbandry practices, financial difficulties and most often as a result of mental illness, particularly hoarding. Nevertheless any case impacting on the welfare of animals requires serious action on the part of the relevant bodies, and it is taken extremely seriously by Dogs Victoria.

We note in our submission that we have had some issues around communication and a lack of transparency regarding process with RSPCA, particularly in relation to seizures of animals and the impact of long-term impounding on animal welfare. We have at times been frustrated by the refusal of the RSPCA to communicate with Dogs Victoria on matters involving our members, as we have outlined in more detail in case studies supplied in our submission.

In our submission we drew attention to one of the recommendations of the Comrie review into the RSPCA, which called on the organisation to work more closely with stakeholders and animal welfare. To this end we have proposed that a memorandum of understanding be established with the RSPCA which would better define a working relationship between the two organisations. Since making our submission to this inquiry I am pleased to report that we have opened a conversation with the RSPCA on this avenue.

But by way of illustration, an MOU will be of mutual benefit as our members must, under our rules and regulations, allow entry to their premises by a Dogs Victoria field officer upon official request. As such, we are often in a position to work with the member and the relevant statutory authority to achieve better animal welfare outcomes much earlier in the course of events before they escalate to become a major welfare concern. This may involve anything from helping the member to reduce their animal numbers and/or fostering their dogs out to other members familiar with the needs of that particular breed, or providing further education around animal husbandry and even supporting the member to access relevant medical and psychiatric services for themselves. In cases of genuine animal welfare concerns it becomes necessary for us to contact the authority, and so in our view it makes sense for all bodies to work together rather than in isolation.

Under such an MOU Dogs Victoria could also coordinate the fostering of dogs that belong to a member rather than having those seized animals impounded. We note under the Comrie review it was echoed that research found the long-term impounding of animals by the RSPCA to have a negative welfare impact on those animals. While we understand that the legalities can take some time, it does not make sense to have animals that are seized on the basis of welfare concerns be then subjected to long-term impoundment which, by its very nature, is a welfare concern. We believe that better welfare outcomes would be realised if Dogs Victoria was able to act as the fostering organisation for Dogs Victoria-registered dogs.

As Dogs Victoria is a not-for-profit, membership-driven organisation we do not source any government income, nor do we rely on charitable donations to operate. As such, there would be no costs to taxpayers for services provided by Dogs Victoria as part of an MOU that incorporates fostering. Indeed, we would see our part of any agreement as related to our core mission of looking after animal welfare and promoting responsible dog ownership. We note that this would possibly require an amendment to the POCTAA to allow for fostering, but we believe it would be a positive outcome from this review for that to occur. We also hope that an MOU would better define the relationship between RSPCA and Dogs Victoria. As noted in our submission we have concerns as to the transparency of process around seized animals. Historically, neither we nor the member are told what happens to their animal once it is in the shelter system.

One final issue that we would like to raise in relation to this inquiry is the role of the RSPCA in education and advocacy around animal welfare. Whilst we support education that promotes responsible pet ownership and animal welfare, we caution against extreme animal activism. To illustrate our concerns, at the time of our submission the RSPCA was running an activist-based campaign targeting pedigree breeds. The campaign was called Love is Blind. This was directly linked to their RSPCA Victoria website, although we note recently that the link to this campaign has been removed. We are unsure therefore of the status of the campaign, but we note that it is in partnership with the Australian Veterinary Association and calls for a fundamental shift in the way purebred dogs are selected and bred in Australia. However, while the campaign targets breed standards and calls for changes, there has been no dialogue with Dogs Victoria or our peak body, the ANKC. Instead we have been excluded from the campaign, which seems primarily to target the puppy-buying public. Although we have many times highlighted our prioritisation of educating dog judges and breeders in prioritising health and moderation, this seems to have been missed by the RSPCA and the Australian Veterinary Association. It does, however, set up an atmosphere of conflict where we believe none needs to exist.

We state in our submission that the RSPCA holds a great deal of both power and privilege, and we believe this means that there must also be responsibility, transparency and accountability. We note that the RSPCA has acknowledged the need for internal changes following the Comrie review. That said, our strong view is that the RSPCA performs an important function in enforcing the POCTAA and has finite resources to do this with. We do not support calls for the abolishment of the RSPCA nor of the stripping of its statutory authority or for government funding to be withdrawn. However, we do believe the RSPCA needs to improve the transparency of its process, its relationship with other stakeholders and its training and support of field staff and avoid being sidetracked by animal rights activists campaigns, particularly in relation to legal activities. We are happy to take any questions.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your contribution and your submission as well. Can I start by just asking a couple of questions. Do we have a turf war on our hands here?

Dr ADAMS — I do not believe so. I think the area of domain of the RSPCA is distinctly different to the area of domain of Dogs Victoria. I think that where they do meet that the welfare of the animals will be better served by a cooperative effort.

The CHAIR — Some of the words that you used during the course of your submission here this morning leads me to ask: if the RSPCA, indeed when it comes to animal welfare, prioritises ideology over good practice, has that been happening? Is there a tendency for that to happen? What is your feeling on that?

Dr ADAMS — Animal welfare is always influenced by ideology. There is a spectrum of views on what animal welfare means. In my opinion sometimes animal welfare can lead to a position where the rights of the animals are almost to the detriment of the rights of the people involved in the situation. However, my view and the view of our organisation is that animal welfare is a relatively objective, scientifically based, evidence-based sphere in which the RSPCA has an oar to operate. However, there are influences that have a stronger

ideological bent and they tend to work on the fringes, and they are slightly more radical elements that can influence organisations such as the RSPCA.

The CHAIR — On that scientific circumstance that you speak of, has the RSPCA always operated within that?

Dr ADAMS — Historically, yes. I guess there is a general view within industry that they may have been influenced in recent years, maybe for even up to a decade, by ideologies that might pull them towards an animal rights flavour. We think that is to the detriment of the core purpose of the organisation and certainly to the detriment of the animals and the people that own them.

Mr BOURMAN — Regarding the Love is Blind campaign, I actually had a look at that website this morning and the RSPCA logo is still on the bottom. Do you think that it is appropriate that someone that is able to investigate and prosecute an industry, not an industry but a group of people, is also campaigning to I will not say wipe them out, but have that sort of influence on it? Is there a conflict between what they are able to do and what they are doing?

Dr ADAMS — Our view is that they have a legal power to do certain things. However, at the same time they appear to be campaigning against legal activities, and that would be one example where that is the case. I think there is some inherent conflict perhaps that the organisation has to deal with in terms of its enforcement powers, which we support, but also with its advocacy activities, which occasionally bring them into dispute with organisations like ours.

Mr BOURMAN — Over time when Dogs Victoria had animal welfare issues and you have tried to bring in the RSPCA or the authorities, as you put it, have there been any issues in getting them involved?

Dr ADAMS — Do you want to speak to that, Sylvia?

Ms POWER — Sure. One of the case studies that we provided related to a situation of hoarding. Dogs Victoria was contacted by the local government to come in and hopefully assist in this particular case. There were only two dogs involved. There were several rabbits involved, but we were obviously looking after the dogs. I went accompanied by the local government officer to the residence. There were the two dogs there. I met the dogs, spoke to the dogs, put my hands on the dogs and found there to be no welfare issues whatsoever. There was nothing wrong with the dogs' condition, coat, weight et cetera. It was a very poor situation domestically speaking. It was squalor; it really was. I discussed with the council officer the concept that the mental health of the person involved — a Dogs Victoria member — would be better served if we could possibly foster those dogs until the member was able to get some sort of control over her life.

Following that, the local government authority also ran a full-day seminar on the bigger picture of hoarding and how to handle the situation, particularly with animals involved. At that seminar the RSPCA inspector attended. We discussed a similar situation that it would be far better for the person involved if, rather than having their animals seized from them, that she could voluntarily surrender the dogs for a period of time into Dogs Victoria's foster care until things could be organised. The RSPCA inspector agreed with that. Unfortunately over the next two or three months, despite many emails, phone calls et cetera both from myself through Dogs Victoria and from the council officer, there was no response from the RSPCA. Eventually we discovered that the dogs had been seized by the RSPCA with no reference to Dogs Victoria, despite during that period us having probably four meetings with high management of the RSPCA where this particular hoarding issue was referred to; but it was never told to us that the dogs had been seized. We do not know where the dogs are. The member has not been able to ascertain where the dogs are. So in a situation like this it is very, very difficult for Dogs Victoria to do what they would like to do for the welfare of the dogs and the welfare of the member.

Mr BOURMAN — Is there a standard definition of what constitutes animal welfare: what is good and what is bad? I know that is a very leading question, but if someone has had a concern with hoarding, you have gone to the place and the animals themselves are in, let us just say, okay condition — others have got no idea of this — under what grounds did the dogs get seized then if they are actually in a good condition?

Ms POWER — 'In danger of poor welfare outcomes' — that is what was written on the document and there has been no further action yet. So the dogs are still in the shelter system and there has been no action against the person. It is one of those ongoing situations where, as Tim referred to, the dogs are not in a good welfare

situation as they are and yet they were taken because they were in danger of a poor welfare situation. As far as judging the condition of the animals, there is a body condition score that you can go by to decide whether the animal is well from a weight and coverage point of view, and of course coat condition as well — eyes, ear, that sort of thing.

Mr BOURMAN — I will just use this as an example — the one we have just talked about. The person lives in squalor, the dogs are okay. In Dogs Victoria's opinion, if the dog is sent to a pound — which I am assuming they have standards for too, but it is locked up — would it have been a better welfare outcome for it not to be seized?

Dr ADAMS — There is a body of evidence that is growing about the psychological and physical health issues that accumulate to dogs that have been impounded for long periods of time. The pound system in my view is a bit of a legacy from earlier days. We know so much more now about the right way to look after individual animals.

Dogs in particular have a certain set of requirements — social, physical and nutritional requirements. There is a mounting body of evidence that would suggest that a pound system for the long term struggles to provide all of those things. We do see cases repeatedly where the long-term impoundment has resulted in a general decline in the health of dogs. I stress there is a difference between short term and long term. It is a long-term problem. In our view the social, nutritional and health needs of a dog are better served by being in an environment that the dog is accustomed to and where a person who is familiar with the needs of that dog and that breed has a degree of expertise and some accountability for that dog. As it turns out, in many cases the ideal environment is actually in another home.

Ms HARTLAND — I have just googled Love is Blind. I am actually struggling a little bit. Can you explain to me what your objections are to this campaign? I do not quite understand.

Dr ADAMS — It is difficult for us to speak in detail because we have not actually been involved in the campaign. This campaign appears to be talking about breed standards. As an organisation that is involved in breed standards, we have the greatest degree of influence on changing breed standards, yet we have not had a dialogue with the people running the campaign on the contents of the campaign.

Ms HARTLAND — No. I am asking you what is your difficulty with the contents of the campaign?

Dr ADAMS — My difficulty is we have not had an opportunity to have any dialogue on it.

Ms HARTLAND — No, but there must be something very specific about the campaign that you are objecting to, because you did raise it in your submission when you spoke. I am just asking you what is it about the content? I am looking at the website. What is it about the campaign? Besides the fact that you have not had dialogue on it, what is the content that you object to?

Dr ADAMS — That is what we are objecting to — that we have not had dialogue on it.

Ms HARTLAND — No. Sorry, I will ask again. What in the content do you have a problem with? If you are saying that there is problem, but it is just because you have not had dialogue, I need to understand what it is about this campaign that you object to?

Dr ADAMS — Okay, I will say it again. The content of the campaign is about breed standards. The RSPCA has no direct influence on breed standards. The Australian Veterinary Association has no direct influence on breed standards. The issue that they have raised is about breed standards, and our organisation has a degree of influence over breed standards. So I would say that in order to have an influence over breed standards, they ought to be having dialogue with the organisation that has influence on breed standards.

Ms HARTLAND — I understand all of that. I am going to ask the question again. What in this website, what in this information do you — —

I am just looking at it for the first time now because you raised it, so I am trying to understand what in the contents do you object to?

Dr ADAMS — The contents themselves.

Ms HARTLAND — Everything in there, or is there something specific that you object to?

Dr ADAMS — The answer remains the same. The thing we object to is the fact that we have not been consulted on an area of our expertise.

Ms HARTLAND — Sorry, it is not an answer.

Mr O’SULLIVAN — Yes, it is.

Ms HARTLAND — No. I do not believe it is answer. You are objecting to a campaign because you have not had dialogue. I understood that completely. I am trying to understand what it is about this campaign that you object to?

Mr O’SULLIVAN — The relevance. It is not relevant to the RSPCA. It is relevant to Dogs Victoria.

The CHAIR — Order! One at a time, please.

Dr ADAMS — I am not sure what else I can give you.

Ms HARTLAND — Well, an answer would have been really helpful, because I am trying to understand. I have looked at this 10 minutes when you mentioned it, so I am actually trying to understand what it is you object to.

Dr ADAMS — I am not sure if I can answer it in a different way, because the content of the campaign relates to the activities of our members, and our members have not had an opportunity to be involved in the campaign. Should there be a need for change, it would seem appropriate that our members would have an opportunity to be involved in the dialogue.

Ms HARTLAND — It is not an answer, but I am not going to continue.

Mr LEANE — I have just a couple of questions on your submission and your evidence today. How many field officers does Dogs Victoria have?

Dr ADAMS — We currently have two.

Mr LEANE — I suppose the discussion around welfare, as you said, can be subjective, and we have said that, but when it comes to cruelty, cruelty is cruelty. I would imagine that people who join your organisation would be people that want to do the best by their pet or their show dog or whatever particular type of dog that they have, so that is not something that you would hope you would come across because of the intent of the people that usually would join your organisation? Would that be fair to say?

Dr ADAMS — Yes, it is not something we expect to see.

Mr LEANE — Yes. And because the nature of the person that would join an organisation like yours I imagine would have good intent?

Dr ADAMS — Look, we assume that; however, we do not rest on our laurels. We are actively looking for the rotten apples, as we call them. We have an active compliance process that starts with field officers but extends right through to a disciplinary process where we can expel members, fine members, and in some cases we suspend them for a number of years so that they are not able to continue their activities.

We would like as part of our MOU with RSPCA and also local government to have an opportunity to share information so that those dogs are not left high and dry. One of the challenges of an organisation like ours is once we expel a member we then have no authority to act against that member because they are not a member. So we would like the opportunity to information share with local government and RSPCA so that if there are dogs in jeopardy, those dogs can still get the care that they need through the proper channels.

Mr LEANE — So obviously you would be supportive of work the RSPCA does with people that are not your members that are clearly cruel towards any sort of animal?

Dr ADAMS — Yes. We have no tolerance at all for people who are cruel to any animal, be it a dog or another species.

Mr LEANE — Yes. So with the MOU — I know you are negotiating it, so it is probably something you want to completely get into — the main objective of that it is to get more of a regular dialogue with the RSPCA about certain cases on the go or just campaigns or things like that. Is that where you are looking to go?

Dr ADAMS — The key thing for us, I think, comes down to transparency and information sharing. We have information that is of value to the RSPCA, and vice versa. There are cases, particularly before they become cruelty — to use your term — or genuine concerns of welfare, where we perhaps have greater opportunity to act than the RSPCA, which really only come in when the welfare button is pushed. We would like the opportunity to work with the RSPCA on areas that we believe are of concern so that when we have got activities regarding members that might be undergoing discipline, we can give the RSPCA a heads-up where we think it may involve them. Likewise, we would also like to know if the RSPCA has got their eye on one of our members so that we can provide assistance at earlier stages. We think that will deliver better outcomes for the dogs concerned and also the people.

Mr LEANE — Last question: a follow-up on that — and this is probably a question for the RSPCA — from your experience is there not a sort of advisory council to the RSPCA for different types of animals, whether they be domestic or agricultural or pets? There are different bodies that have concerns with different areas. There is no sort of advisory council that meets every couple of months and has discussions around the general policy and what is generally going on? There is nothing like that?

Dr ADAMS — Are you talking about a multi-organisational?

Mr LEANE — Sort of like, yes. So Dogs Victoria would be at the table, and there might be other groups, similar groups to yourselves — a sort of advisory group, as you said, sharing information.

Dr ADAMS — At the national level there have been attempts to do that sort of thing, generally led by industry. However, there is no sort of state-level regulated activity. There is an animal welfare advisory council. Is that still happening?

Ms POWER — Yes. It has been restructured, but that operates certainly. Rather than being an industry representative-type body, it has become an expert-appointed body, but it does really cover what you have mentioned, yes.

Mr LEANE — Okay. Thank you.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Dr Adams, you have mentioned in your presentation in relation to the RSPCA tending to over the last 10 years, in your words, have a change of ideology in terms of the way they go about their operations, tending to sneak into the advocacy and activism areas. Can you give us some examples of when that has happened over the last 10 years? I guess my second question will be: why do you think there has been a change in their ideology over that 10 years?

Dr ADAMS — I think it is a shift rather than a step change. It is very hard to understand why it might have occurred, because I do not know the inner workings of the organisation. But probably an example of recent times would be this one specifically about breed — the Love is Blind campaign, which is specifically about the particular way a dog is built. By way of background, I have been in the industry since 1994, and I would not have expected that 10 or 15 years ago. I would have expected 10 or 15 years ago that we were looking at things that were really of genuine concern or across-the-board things — things like caged hens and those sorts of things. But now we are talking about the fundamental way a dog is built and breeding, and it is not something I would have expected to see from an organisation like RSPCA. That is probably a good case in point, as an example.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — I can understand that. So basically do you think that as a result of this ideology change — and we might see if we can work out throughout the day as to what that might have been — it is actually getting in the road of the fundamental tasks that they are actually designed to do, which is the genuine protection of animals, which we all agree with?

Dr ADAMS — Yes. I think it throws up a conflict, where everybody agrees that cruelty to animals is completely undesirable and should not be tolerated. But the challenge for us is that while we support that, it does throw up conflict for us where we are being perhaps criticised by the very organisation we wish to partner with in order to stamp out cruelty. I guess the fundamental challenge that the RSPCA has is that, because its funding is sourced through charitable donations, they have to stay relevant. I think for them a big challenge is staying relevant, and campaigning is a way for them of staying relevant, perhaps, but it does potentially throw up a conflict where we would rather be working with them to eliminate welfare problems, be that within our membership or outside our membership. We would rather be partnering with them, not be in conflict with them, over issues.

Mr EIDEH — Dr Adams, my question is a bit different. I just want to ask: what are your views on the amount of funding provided by the government to the RSPCA for its enforcement functions under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act? Is the current level of funding adequate to undertake these duties?

Dr ADAMS — No. They are under-resourced for the job they have to do, and because they are essentially required to visit premises, that is quite resource intensive. Each welfare matter requires a degree of expertise and an individual headcount, and I can certainly sympathise with them being under-resourced in that regard, so I would support any way of increasing funding for that particular function.

Mr EIDEH — Is more funding required, in your view?

Dr ADAMS — That would be a question the RSPCA should answer, but I would support any means of increasing the level of resourcing for their inspectorate.

Mr EIDEH — One more question: do you consider that the RSPCA has a good relationship with other key stakeholders in animal-related industries?

Dr ADAMS — I can only speak for the relationship they have had with Dogs Victoria. I think historically it has not been as good as perhaps it is right now — and when I say ‘right now’ I am talking in the current weeks and months. It just so happens that the current CEO of the RSPCA and I have worked in other activities in animal welfare in days gone by, and that has meant for a very easy and quick bridge-building for our organisation and the RSPCA. As I said, Dr Walker and I have known each other for 20-odd years, so that does help us.

The CHAIR — One last question from me, unless I think of another one: I am just interested to know: it seems to me there has been, if not stated then certainly intimated, a degree of conflict between Dogs Victoria and the RSPCA. Could you tell us a little bit more about that — how that has developed, how it has been resolved and what have been any issues that have caused that conflict?

Dr ADAMS — Do you want to speak to that, Sylvia?

Ms POWER — Dogs Victoria has felt that we have been marginalised by the RSPCA. We do feel that we can offer a great deal to the situation of the maintenance of animal welfare. We have expertise, we have communication with our members, we have probably in some cases inside knowledge, if you like — a bit of intelligence — and we are very keen to be able to use that in conjunction with the RSPCA for the benefit of the animals. But as I say, we feel we have been marginalised. We do understand there are legal aspects to this, but if that could be adjusted in some way through a memorandum of understanding, which we are working towards, we do believe there could be a much more productive relationship there.

The CHAIR — Would you like to expand on the legal aspects?

Ms POWER — I am sorry; I am not capable of doing that. Simply, we are constantly told that legally no information about the member or the dogs can be released.

The CHAIR — Right. Dr Adams, would you like to add anything to that?

Dr ADAMS — I think there are some challenges around information sharing, and I do not know the detail about what the RSPCA is permitted to share and not share. However, in some cases if there are legal barriers to sharing information, it is my view that it does not help the animals in the situation and that we would like to be able to assist the animals. Our goal here really is to make sure that the animals are taken care of and their

people. So if there are legal impediments, we do not know the detail of that, but we would like to have a means of overcoming those if it benefits the animals.

The CHAIR — We will have to find out if the privacy act applies to dogs.

Mr LEANE — Can I ask a follow-up?

The CHAIR — Certainly.

Mr LEANE — How easy is it for your organisation to foster out a dog that you would deem would be a good practice at the time?

Dr ADAMS — Within our organisation?

Mr LEANE — Yes.

Dr ADAMS — Very easy.

Mr LEANE — It is an easy process?

Ms POWER — It happens. In a practical sense, it happens all the time.

Mr LEANE — So it would not be difficult if you had to make a couple of phone calls?

Dr ADAMS — I can paint a picture to answer that question. Our members are people who are very, very passionate about dogs and particular breeds of dogs — so much so that anything to do with that breed they want to know about. If there was a fellow member who had that breed who was struggling, it would not take much for us to contact the club and let them know that a particular member needed some help with looking after a couple of dogs for some time, and within 36 hours you would have a fostering arrangement in place and those dogs would be in an environment where the carer understood the breed, was quite dedicated to the breed and had a degree of compassion for the situation — and all of that of course at no cost to anybody, because our members volunteer their own time and resources to do that just because of their passion for that dog.

Mr LEANE — Would that be in cases like someone going overseas for three months, at a loose end, or more extreme cases?

Ms POWER — More extreme. People, if they are capable of looking after their dogs — —

Mr LEANE — If they could look after them themselves, they should do that.

Ms POWER — Yes, that is right.

Mr LEANE — But in cases where people are in a bit of a dire situation.

Dr ADAMS — Yes. So in a situation, for example, where someone needed to go into hospital for a time, it would not be much to put a call out and farm out those dogs for a time until they were back and settled and so on.

The CHAIR — Any other questions? No, we have covered all possibilities. Thank you so much for joining us today. You will receive a transcript in a relatively short period of time, and if I could ask you just to proofread that to check for i's not being dotted and t's not being crossed, that would be a marvellous thing. Thank you very much. We do appreciate your contribution today.

Witnesses withdrew.