



3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015

Hon Rick Mazza MLC  
Chairman

Select Committee into the Operations of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to  
Animals Western Australia (Inc)  
GPO Box A11  
Perth WA 6837

Dear Mr Mazza

### **Inquiry into the Operations of the RSPCA**

The Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA (PGA) is a non-profit industry organisation established in 1907, which represents primary producers in both the pastoral and agricultural regions in Western Australia.

As a state farming organization, the PGA supports its membership in the operation of profitable farm businesses.

The PGA welcomes the opportunity to make comment on the operations of the RSPCA, subject to the committee's terms of reference.

The PGA points out that this inquiry into the RSPCA is not unique. In 2013, the Parliament of Tasmania Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts inquired into the RSPCA, and in 2010, the Parliament of New South Wales Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee N° 5 inquired into the RSPCA Raid on the Waterways Wildlife Park.

At the outset, the PGA says it has no wish to cast aspersions on the charitable work that the RSPCA does in caring for animals in need.

However, it is the PGA's belief that the RSPCA has shifted to a policy position that is inimical to the business interests of the PGA's membership.

The RSPCA variously describes its purpose as;

- Prevent cruelty to animals by enforcing the existing law,
  - Establish further legislation to protect animals,
  - Educate the public in responsible animal care,
- (source <http://www.rspcawa.asn.au/about/history.html>), or

to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection.  
(RSPCA Australia document prepared for The Australian Charities Fund Operations Limited).

Yet, a simple Google search for RSPCA WA and clicking the "top hit" takes the user to the RSPCA web page that opens with a banner impugning the export of livestock from Australia.

According to an "Extract from Hansard [COUNCIL — Wednesday, 6 May 2015]", the Hon. Darren West MLC read into the record the biographies of the elected board of governance of the RSPCA.

According to this record one board member, "(are) the proud parents of two dogs and two cats". People cannot be parents of animals. They own pets for their personal gratification.

Further, another board member "and his wife have two children and two small dogs named Lucky and Brave". Seemingly, this board member's children do not rate recognition above that of two small dogs.

Another board member "is in the process of adopting a dog". Dogs can be bought, or sold or given as a gift but they are not adopted in the true sense of the word.

The PGA makes mention of these biographies, not to belittle those board members but to show that they have a position on animals that personifies them and attributes human traits to animals.

This is simply contrary to the law, where animals are the property of its owners as chattel goods. The same law provides protection for animals and recognises the need for animals to be free from suffering. Farmers abide by this law.

Such an organisation, with such a board of governance should not have a role in the execution of government policy through receipt of either funding, or recognition under legislation.

In 2013, Western Australia supplied 32.5% of Australia's live cattle exports and 82.8% of its live sheep exports (MLA Feb. 2014). Consequently, the importance of livestock export to WA's regional economy must not be overlooked.

According to a March 2014 CIE study commissioned by Australian Wool Innovation, without the livestock export trade, wool production in WA could fall by 12%, costing farm business enterprises \$302 million.

Specialist sheep breeding operations would be affected the most, as they rely on livestock sales for most of their income. Without these specialist breeders, the size of the WA sheep flock would undoubtedly fall, causing flow on effects to the rest of the sheep industry.

The PGA is concerned that the RSPCA opposes a lawful and legally approved business activity that adds millions of dollars to the Western Australian economy.

Further, at a time of great fiscal rectitude, the Government of Western Australia gives the RSPCA a recurring grant of \$500,000.

Whilst the PGA is of no doubt that this grant is subject to conditions, the fact is, the RSPCA do not need it. According to documentation lodged with the Australian Charities Fund Operations Ltd, only 3% of its funding is provided by the Commonwealth and state and territories governments.

However, it seems likely that this funding, small though it is, allows the RSPCA to allocate other income to fund an activist campaign against live export.

The PGA notes that the Recognised Biosecurity Groups recognised under the *Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007* receive matching funding from the state government and their activities are subject to the oversight of the Biosecurity Council of WA, who report to the Parliament of Western Australia.

The administration of the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* currently rests with Department of Agriculture and Food WA, and prior to that with the Department of Local Government. Each of these agencies makes an annual report to the Parliament of Western Australia.

RSPCA WA appoints General Inspectors under the Act within Western Australia with significant police powers, including search, entry, inquiry, and seizure.

If the RSPCA WA is to continue to hold these powers and receive public funding, the PGA believes the RSPCA must be accountable to the public of WA by reporting and being accountable for its activities to the Parliament of Western Australia.

Further, Section 40 (1) (b) of the Act, Care of Animals says that an inspector may - direct a person in control of an animal to provide to the animal, any food, water, shelter, care or treatment the inspector considers necessary to ensure the welfare, safety and health of the animal.

Subsection (2) says a person must comply with a direction given under subsection (1) (b), or be subject to a penalty of \$20,000 and imprisonment for one year.

It is unsatisfactory for a non-government organization to have access to such unfettered powers.

The PGA believes (and the continued consumption by society of meat proves) that there is a difference between those animals kept as companion animals, and production animals that are destined for human consumption as food.

Animal welfare organizations that choose not to recognize this are indulging in a form of cognitive dissonance.

Consequently, the appropriate range of activities for the RSPCA is within the *Dog Act 1976* and the *Cat Act 2011*, and their statutory recognition under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* should be removed.

The PGA reiterates that in the future, the RSPCA should confine its activities to companion animals and the welfare of production animals should be the responsibility of national and state agricultural agencies.

Should the committee wish it, I would be happy to appear before it.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Digby Stretch', with a stylized, cursive script.

Digby Stretch

PGA Vice President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Randles', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ian Randles

Policy Officer –  
Grains, Livestock &  
Climate Change