

*Select Committee into the Operations of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Western Australia (Inc) — “Select Committee into the Operations of the Royal Society
for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Western Australia (Inc) — Motion*

Resumed from 17 August on the following motion moved by Hon Sue Ellery —

That the report be noted.

Hon JIM CHOWN: On 13 May 2015, this place ordered that a select committee be established to inquire into the operations of the RSPCA WA, including an examination of its funding from the government, its objectives and the use of its powers. The report of the select committee was tabled in the Legislative Council on 19 May. The government’s response to the report was tabled yesterday and the majority report made 26 recommendations and 56 findings. The majority of the recommendations deal with matters that have been captured by the 2015 report on the “Independent Review of the Investment in and Administration of the Animal Welfare Act 2002 in Western Australia”, known as the Easton review. The report was tabled in the Legislative Council on 2 December 2015, some five months prior to the commissioning of the select committee, and was authored by an independent panel that was appointed by the then Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Ken Baston.

The government response supports eight of the select committee’s recommendations and notes a further 16, as these are matters for consideration through the implementation process of the Easton review. One recommendation was not supported and no comment was made in respect of another, as it did not require a response from government. The government recognises the importance placed on animal welfare by the community and is committed to ensuring that animals are given the appropriate level of care, consistent with community expectations. To that end, improvements can always be made and animal welfare is no exception. The Easton review report made 19 recommendations, all of which were endorsed by the government. Twenty of the 26 recommendations of the select committee have been captured by the Easton review. The government recognises the importance of the Easton review recommendations and has made an additional appropriation to the Department of Agriculture and Food of \$1.145 million for 2016–17 and further similar funding for the out years for that implementation. DAFWA has already begun to action the recommendations of the Easton review and those recommendations of the select committee that are captured by the Easton review. For example, select committee majority recommendation 25 recommends —

... that additional general inspectors be appointed in regional and remote Western Australia to meet the identified unmet need in animal welfare.

The Easton review considered this issue and the government has made funding available to implement this recommendation with additional general inspectors now being available in Northam, Geraldton, Albany and Perth. The government also fully supports DAFWA’s continued role in the administration of the Animal Welfare Act 2002, a responsibility the department has had since 1 July 2011. Prior to that, the act was administered by the then Department of Local Government.

In 2011–12, coinciding with the transfer of the administration of the act to DAFWA, the government increased direct funding to the RSPCA from \$250 000 to \$500 000 per annum. This is in addition to other grants from the WA Lotteries Commission. The grant funding is for the purposes of public education and promotion of responsible companion animal ownership; training of general inspectors employed by the RSPCA; enforcement of the act in relation to companion animals; and providing a 24-hour complaint receipt and assessment service for public reports of animal cruelty. The government supports the work undertaken by the RSPCA WA and looks forward to working with the RSPCA and other key stakeholders to implement the shared recommendations of the select committee and the Easton review and to forge improved animal welfare outcomes in Western Australia for all animals.

Resolved, on motion by Hon Sue Ellery (Leader of the Opposition), that consideration of the report be postponed to the next sitting of the Council.