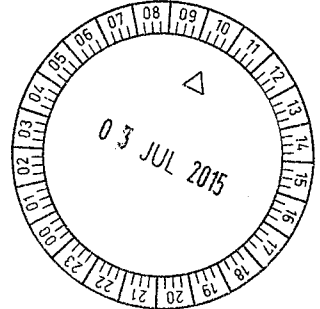


Friday 3rd July, 2015

**Submission from Sentient, The Veterinary Institute for Animal Ethics:
*Inquiry into the Operations of RSPCA (WA)***

To the Samantha Parson, Committee Clerk,
Select Committee into the Operation of Operations of RSPCA (WA)
Parliament of Western Australia

By email: selra@parliament.wa.gov.au



As an independent association of veterinarians and associates solely dedicated to animal welfare and ethics, we are concerned as to the basis of this inquiry and welcome the opportunity to submit these concerns. They form the basis of our complete rejection of this Bill, which we regard as regressive, misleading, and detrimental to animal welfare and the public interest.

- 1. Basis of the inquiry:** Sentient has serious concerns regarding the origin for this inquiry. Rick Mazza MLC is a member of the Shooters and Fishers Party which has a vested interest in hunting and shooting animals, an activity which is strongly opposed by the RSPCA on welfare grounds. Given that Mr Mazza has been very vocal in his criticism and condemnation of the RSPCA it would appear that the inquiry is an attempt to discredit the RSPCA rather than being based on any valid assertions because in Mr Mazza's opinion (see <http://www.farmweekly.com.au/news/agriculture/agribusiness/general-news/rspca-inquiry-submission-period-closing/2736499.aspx>), the RSPCA has become an animal rights group. This is neither relevant nor correct. In addition, the motion for the inquiry was strongly supported by Liberal and National Party MPs, again parties who have a vested interest in agriculture and the perpetuation of specific practices and industries which do not align with RSPCA policies, in particular live export and intensive farming.
- 2. RSPCA Funding from Government:** Given that the RSPCA (WA) inspectorate performs a regulatory function and it is a not for profit organization, it is incumbent upon the government to contribute to the operational expenses. It is understood that the current level of funding does not cover the full operating costs of the inspectorate and that the remainder needs to be sourced from the community. This is not acceptable and full funding for the inspectorate should be provided by the government.
- 3. Objectives of RSPCA (WA):** The primary objectives of the RSPCA (WA) are found in its Rules. It is clear that it is an animal welfare organisation whose functions are to enforce animal welfare legislation and to prevent animal cruelty. The former is to investigate and respond to reports of animal abuse and neglect. In terms of prevention of cruelty, education programs are implemented to encourage empathy, compassion and respect for animals. In addition, the organization will lobby and campaign to see improvements in the care and treatment of animals, which may include legal reform and steps to see the abolition of practices including intensive



production, live export and use of whips in horse racing. Many of these are in conflict with government policy and industry practices and some of those who profit from animal use may oppose such campaigns. To suggest that the RSPCA is an animal rights organization is unjust and erroneous. Nowhere in the objectives of the RSPCA does it state that animals should not be used by humans including the consumption of animal products or use of animals for research. To suggest that the RSPCA is an animal rights organization indicates a lack of understanding of the differences between an animal rights and animal welfare organization. The animal rights movement is based on philosophical principles whereas RSPCA policies and campaigns are based on applying animal welfare science to address situations with clear evidence of animal suffering. RSPCA (WA), like other state member societies, contributes and abides by all national policies of which those who benefit financially or personally from using animals may view as being radical as such policies may oppose particular activities. It is interesting to note that the RSPCA is held in high regard by the general community with many supporting their policies including their opposition to live export.

4. Powers of RSPCA (WA):

It is unclear why this is being questioned. A prosecution can only be mounted if the evidence has been collected lawfully, and only cases that involve clear evidence of serious offences are pursued, to ensure the highest chances of a conviction.

Submission made by:

The Executive of Sentient, The Veterinary Institute for Animal Ethics

Dr Rosemary Elliott, President
Dr Adele Lloyd, Vice President
Dr Katherine van Ekert Onay, Secretary
Mr Matthew Lloyd, Public Officer

