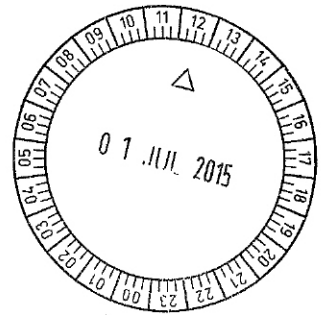


SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE
APPOINTED TO CONSIDER THE OPERATIONS OF THE
ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS (INC)

DARRYL JAMES*



To the Chairperson and Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for the RSPCA WA. I am a donor to the group. I fully support the group's objectives for "...all animals to be accepted as sentient beings treated with dignity, compassion and respect." and firmly believe that, in carrying out its brief, the RSPCA WA operates with consistent due process and ethical practices.

All bodies in receipt of government funding must be accountable and subject to independent scrutiny and I submit the following case on those terms.

Introduction

Animal welfare must encompass both individual and systemic human behaviour and the RSPCA WA can provide a demonstrable and admirable record of success in steering the acceptance of enlightened practices in both areas. For example, in terms of companion animals, in establishing community awareness in behavioural regimes and responsibilities, rescue operations and insurance policies etc. Additionally, in such industry spheres as battery hens, sow stalls, live animal export etc. the group has guided and championed beneficial change for the animals, for the achievement of our common humanitarian goals and, ultimately, for successful commercial enterprise.

A deep and fundamental commitment to the prevention of cruelty to animals is an undeniable tenet of our society and one that we have shown time and time again to be paramount in our humanity.

Summary

That the RSPCA WA has very strong community support for its activities is evidenced by the fact that it derives 94% of funding directly from that community. Arguably, therein lies the foundation of the powers it exercises including the authority to prosecute in cases of animal cruelty such as individual neglect, physical attacks and some broad spectrum commercial and animal husbandry practices for which a strong independent community monitoring process and authority is essential.

That the RSPCA WA must deal with the political and commercial manifestations of our society's stewardship of animals is a given and in my view epitomised by the initiation of this Select Committee investigation into its operation and the use of its powers. As our representative in these forums, I have no doubt whatsoever that the RSPCA WA conducts its operations as it should - judiciously without fear or favour with the welfare of animals paramount in all things.

The role of the RSPCA WA should ideally be complementary to a suite of institutional regulatory mechanisms (such as DPAW, DAFS, industry representatives, community members etc.) all operating in partnership in the interests of ethical treatment of animals - not engaging in power struggles that undermine the enormous and complex task at hand.

Industry reform of animal welfare practices in agriculture and commerce is a hugely challenging arena nationally and internationally.

A major challenge in the complexity of animal welfare is the control of feral animals in agriculture, food production, animal husbandry as well as national parks, nature reserves and private property. However, I believe all these poor creatures are victims of human ignorance or carelessness or stupidity (eg cane toads) and such we have a moral obligation, a duty of care, to ensure such controls are managed with as much compassion and respect as possible. For this to happen proper - formal - structures need to be in place to moderate and monitor the processes involved and research more enlightened methodologies - and there's no doubt we've got a long way to go. In this matter, to even suggest that an important instrumentality such as the RSPCA WA be restricted to narrow domestic confines is counterproductive at the very least - *surely?*

Surely it should be inconceivable to argue that reform is not needed or that such reform would be all the better without the independent gatekeeping role of the RSPCA WA?

Surely such points of view would be impossible to wish for, or justify, if our shared values in these important aspects of social morality were based on animal not human imperatives?

In summary, I have utmost confidence that the outcome of the deliberations of this Parliamentary Select Committee in this regard will be an increased appreciation and practical support of this invaluable and honourable body. Our society as a whole would be immeasurably diminished without its benign, productive and constructive presence.

Best wishes.

Darryl James (*Ms)

25 June 2015

Appendix

My qualifications for my points of view are as follows:

- I have been fortunate to share my life with a number of animal companions
- I am not a vegetarian and consume meat, dairy, eggs etc. Therefore strongly feel that I have a duty of care to all animals killed or exploited on my behalf to do my very best to ensure their protection from cruelty in husbandry and death
- I was born a farmer's daughter, although sadly not raised as one, but my legacy is a strong kinship with the land (one of my favourite TV shows is Landline!!).
- I am very aware of the devastations caused to farming operations and native habitats by feral animals and acknowledge the need for controls - including at times control of excessive native animal populations.
- I am a nature lover, spending a great deal of time in the bush including private properties, national parks etc. I have been very disturbed by some of the sights that I've seen which I suspect comprise multiple and unnecessarily cruel animal deaths.