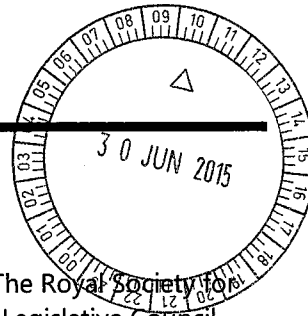


Select Committee into the Operations of the RSPCA WA (Inc)



From: Kate Fantinel <media@ssaa.org.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 30 June 2015 10:01 AM
To: Select Committee into the Operations of the RSPCA WA (Inc)
Subject: SSAA Submission - Select Committee into the Operations of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Western Australia (Inc) - Legislative Council
Attachments: SSAA WA and SSAA National Submission - Select Committee into the operations of The RSPCA WA (Inc) FINAL.pdf
Importance: High

Good morning Ms Parsons,

On behalf of the SSAA WA President Ron Bryant, SSAA National President Geoff Jones and CEO Tim Bannister, please find attached a submission from the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia regarding the Select Committee into the Operations of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Western Australia (Inc) - Legislative Council.

The SSAA would be willing to appear before the Committee to discuss our submission and answer any questions.

It would be much appreciated if you could acknowledge receipt of this submission, and also email through a copy of the final report once tabled.

Thank you for your time. I trust our submission is received with the goodwill in which it is intended.

Kind Regards,

Kate Fantinel

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30 June 2015

Dear Committee Members,

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Western Australia (SSAA WA) and Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) thanks the Select Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission into the operations of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Western Australia (RSPCA WA).

As our joint submission shows, the SSAA is concerned that the RSPCA WA is misusing government and/or public donations to fund an animal liberationist agenda, through misleading and inaccurate public educational campaigns, specifically against hunting.

As a major stakeholder in legitimate shooting and hunting activities in Australia, the SSAA is also concerned that this once well-respected charity is using its position to carry out the extreme animal rights agenda of a select few in the RSPCA WA, rather than conduct animal welfare activities as it was founded to do.

The SSAA will continue to work towards ensuring the protection of our 170,000 members' freedoms and their interests, and we hope this submission is received with the goodwill in which it is intended.

Ron Bryant
SSAA WA President

Geoff Jones
SSAA National President

Tim Bannister
SSAA National CEO



**SSAA Western Australia
and SSAA National
Submission Paper**

**Select Committee
into the operations of
The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty
to Animals Western Australia (Inc)**

July 2015

Executive Summary

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Western Australia (RSPCA WA) has become an extreme animal rights pressure group that is pushing a highly questionable political agenda. It cannot be considered an animal welfare group and charity anymore. The recent example of the RSPCA WA's public campaign against recreational hunting highlights this sad fact. Using a doctored image of a non-native hare to conduct a socially biased education campaign based on emotion rather than facts, and portraying our members and shooters at large in an unfair and demonising way, is not an acceptable use of government or donor funds. By purporting that funds will go towards true animal welfare initiatives, as its donor webpage suggests, the RSPCA WA is misleading both the government and its loyal support base that naively think their generous donation or bequests are going towards true animal welfare initiatives.

The RSPCA WA is abusing its powers by using its proud history and recognisable brand to shape public opinion, with recent views expressed reminiscent of the animal liberation movement. This departs from the organisation's original purpose. There is no doubt that the RSPCA WA has a role to play in sheltering abandoned dogs and cats, educating responsible pet owners and running puppy schools. However, its foray into running false and emotive public campaigns paid for by government funds or donations can no longer be ignored. The SSAA does not accept that the RSPCA WA is using its funding under the guise of a charity to conduct true animal welfare activities anymore.

Section One - The RSPCA WA's funding from the government

The RSPCA WA is "a charity, not a government agency" funded by "supporter donations" to conduct "lifesaving work", and relying on donations and bequests that accounts for three quarters of their income.¹ According to the 2013-2014 Annual Report, the RSPCA WA declared that:

"Our operating costs are around \$8 million per year and we receive \$500,000 per year from the State Government, which helps to fund our Inspectorate and education initiatives. For the balance, which is around 94% of our total costs, we rely heavily on public donations with bequests playing a major part."²

The RSPCA WA is listed as a Charity Institution and registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), as required by law.³ As declared in its 2013-2014 Annual Report, it is exempt from income tax under Section 50-5 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*, which grants tax-deductibility status according to the Australian Taxation Office.⁴ A charitable institution can include animal welfare societies, and must, by law, be not-for-profit; have a charitable purpose; and be for the public benefit.⁵

SSAA Comments

The SSAA is concerned with the vague reference to "education initiatives", which the RSPCA WA indicates the \$500,000 funding it receives from the State Government is used for. The RSPCA WA's recent public campaign against recreational hunting, in which a photo of a non-native hare downloaded from a photo-sharing website was doctored to appear as though it had been shot inhumanely in the backside, could be considered an education campaign, albeit clearly misleading. The doctored hare image was published in *The West Australian* newspaper and on the RSPCA WA's Facebook page under the caption:

"Take action TODAY to save animals from cruelty and death by hobby hunters. The State Government is currently considering a recommendation to allow a two year trial of recreational hunting on public land in WA.

Act today to stop this proposal becoming a reality - visit www.rspcawa.asn.au and SHARE this post."⁶

The RSPCA WA's decision to depict the hare in this manner suggests hunters treat pest animal control as a sport without any regard for animal welfare. It continued this graphic and shocking campaign by publishing another full-page advertisement in *The Sunday Times* newspaper, this time showing a non-native roe deer hanging from a tree branch juxtaposed with a trophy. RSPCA WA President Lynne Bradshaw told the ABC that:

"We're hoping that the message being portrayed is animals actually don't deserve to be treated cruelly, they're not trophies."⁷

The SSAA understands the RSPCA WA received a discount for these advertisements due to their charity status, and paid \$24,500 of either donated or government money to secure the ads. Furthermore, these two advertisements, in our view, appear to be a breach of advertising standards, and it has been suggested via a SSAA member with legal standing that the advertisements may also be a breach of law as it appears to seek financial gain with false images, or put simply, fraud.

Even if the RSPCA WA reveals it spent donor funds and not its government funding on such an inaccurate educational campaign, it is not clear on its website that donations will be used to fund such highly offensive campaigns. Furthermore, the RSPCA WA's use of government, therefore taxpayer's, money, or donor funds to spread such vile messages is not an acceptable education campaign for a charity to be conducting. This unfairly marginalizes and demonises sections of the community who carry out pest control for conservation or livestock protection purposes.

As the RSPCA WA has clearly become an extreme animal liberation group, the State Government should seriously consider if its generous contributions to this organisation is viable, an appropriate use of taxpayers' money, and being properly spent by the recipient. The SSAA highly recommends the findings of the Federal Government's Inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations, where the charity status of organisations who abuse this status to fund questionable campaigns and initiatives is scrutinised, is considered by the Committee.

Section Two - The RSPCA WA's objective

The RSPCA WA's objective is clearly stated on its website, and that is:

“Our vision is for all animals to be accepted as sentient beings treated with dignity, compassion and respect.”

The RSPCA WA abides by the policies of the national body, the RSPCA Australia, which has created a series of policies and position papers. The RSPCA Policy E02 Management of wild animals, clause 2.1, states:

“RSPCA Australia acknowledges that in some circumstances it is necessary to manage populations of wild animals, native or introduced.”⁸

The RSPCA position paper titled ‘Is hunting using shooting a humane way to kill pest animals?’ declares that “animal welfare experts agree that shooting can be a humane method of killing animals”, listing a series of requirements including the use of “experienced, skilled and responsible shooters”, appropriate equipment and distances, minimum chasing, and that “wounded animals are located and killed as quickly and humanely as possible.”⁹ It concludes by saying that “the variable nature of ‘hunting’ means that some degree of animal suffering is likely.”¹⁰

The RSPCA's policies and position papers on recreational hunting appear to oppose any form of recreational hunting.¹¹

SSAA Comments

The SSAA is wary of any organisation that accepts the unproven science of animals as sentient beings. The theory of animals as sentient beings originally referred to animals feeling limited sensations, such as happiness and pain. In current times, sentience is used by animal liberation groups to further their cause by promoting the misleading version of sentience where animals experience many different types of feelings, have conscious thought and are therefore equal to humans.¹²

The SSAA respects all forms of animal life and animal welfare, but also strongly supports the need for responsible pest and wildlife management in Western Australia and across Australia. Some of our members participate in the legitimate and lawful activity of hunting for a number of reasons, ranging from providing fresh and free-range food for the family; conservation benefits for some of our national parks in other states; or to protect the family farming business from damaging pests and overly abundant native animals.

It appears the RSPCA WA has developed an anti-hunting position using the emotive term of ‘cruelty’ to support its view while, on the other hand, ignoring the natural cruelty that is the Australian outback, where animals are exposed to natural cruelties of drought, starvation, predation and the natural order of the food chain.

The RSPCA WA has also made clear its political objective to ban recreational hunting on public lands, with Ms Bradshaw telling the ABC PM program that:

“There is no monitoring, so it's really open slather and that's fine if you're an expert marksman. But for hobby hunters, it's...it's...it's just not...animal welfare doesn't seem to be a consideration at all.”¹³

The term 'hobby hunter' or 'amateur hunter' is often used by animal liberation groups in an attempt to paint the incorrect picture that hunters and shooters are not responsible, proficient or respectful of animal welfare issues. This is simply not true. All SSAA members must adhere to Codes of Conduct and policies covering any form of shooting, including hunting, with our Conservation & Wildlife Management (CWM) groups required to undertake further training regarding hunting practices, policies and animal welfare education. Using the term 'hobby', which is commonly associated with stamp collecting or gardening, is insulting and implies no knowledge or skill is obtained before partaking in the activity.

The RSPCA WA also appears to have steered from RSPCA Australia's policy on the management of wild animals, in which it acknowledges "in some circumstances it is necessary to manage populations of wild animals, native or introduced."¹⁴ The policy further states:

"Programs and strategies which prescribe the management of wild animals (such as threat abatement plans and native animal management plans) must be justified, supported by scientific evidence and have clearly stated aims. Such programs should be subject to public consultation, ethical approval and review prior to implementation. Once implemented, the results of such programs should be regularly monitored, evaluated, publicly reported and used to inform future activities."¹⁵

The RSPCA WA opposed the State Government's Inquiry into the potential environmental contribution of recreational hunting systems from the outset. It did not want any public consultation on the issue, with Ms Bradshaw telling the ABC PM program that the State Government should do more to police illegal hunting on public lands before it even considers introducing a formal system.¹⁶ She added to this in the RSPCA WA magazine, saying:

"I am deeply concerned that this is even being considered by our Members of Parliament. The RSPCA does not support the killing of animals for sport. Proponents of recreational hunting say their activities contribute to feral animal control but their methods have been shown time and time again to be ineffective and inhumane."¹⁷

This clearly demonstrates that the RSPCA WA has no intention of adhering to the RSPCA's policies on managing wild animals, as it vehemently oppose any formal system which sees shooting utilised, in this case, on WA public lands. Instead, it has gone down the path well-worn by animal liberation groups which oppose any form of hunting, even if there is a clear environmental and conservation benefit.

This opposition to any form of hunting, which the RSPCA WA uses the blanket term "recreational hunting" to describe, declares it is "inevitable" that hunted animals will experience "pain or distress", because not all hunters have the skills to maintain total accuracy and zero error.¹⁸ Promoting a total ban on hunting, even if it follows the organisation's policy on managing wild populations, is a utopian and unrealistic way of thinking, and an inappropriate approach from a government-funded charity group. The RSPCA should be focusing on real and occurring animal welfare issues, not pushing an anti-hunting ideology based on the animal liberation principles of a select few within the organisation.

Section Three - The use of the RSPCA WA's powers

The SSAA understands this section is referring to the powers afforded to RSPCA WA inspectors under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*. The RSPCA Australia refers to these powers as "similar in nature to those afforded to police officers."¹⁹ The RSPCA WA also has also powers in terms of shaping public opinion, driving community sentiments and educating the community.

SSAA Comments

The SSAA is aware of concerns from farmers regarding some inspectors from RSPCA WA accessing their properties invasively, feeling harassed and even bullied because of the RSPCA's opposition to live exports and animal rights agenda. The SSAA also understands there is an argument surrounding why citizens are afforded powers to conduct inspections and action animal welfare cases with no accountability to the general public in the same way the Western Australia Police are scrutinised. The SSAA trusts those representing landholders and farmers will convey any views regarding the RSPCA WA's use of powers for this purpose.

The SSAA also understands that former RSPCA WA President Eric Ball has viewed similar sentiments and concerns in a report handed to the State Government regarding this inquiry.²⁰ The SSAA has heard that a select few within the RSPCA are responsible for this shift towards animal rights over animal welfare, and supports Mr Ball for speaking out about the continual shift of RSPCA WA towards animal liberation ideology in its activities, as well as raising awareness about the questionable actions of some of its inspectors.

The SSAA is predominately concerned with how the RSPCA WA uses its power of influence in terms of swaying or misleading public opinion to suit its political cause. The RSPCA itself does have a proud history and is well-known by most Australians. Its origins in the United Kingdom has helped cement its name as an accepted charity and part of society. The SSAA has no issue with the RSPCA WA using its heritage to promote particular services, such as housing abandoned animals, educating new pet owners, and other services mentioned in this submission. The SSAA, however, does not accept that running educational campaigns using the recognisable RSPCA logo to portray recreational hunting and hunters at large as incompetent brutes with no regard for animal welfare is a credible use of its brand. Furthermore, it is not a true function of a charity.

The SSAA questions how the RSPCA WA is using its power, both in terms of its inspectors and animal welfare cases and its power to sway public opinion, and trusts this inquiry will investigate any reported abuses of power raised.

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