



Economic Development,
Jobs, Transport
and Resources

Victorian Government Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the RSPCA Victoria

February 2018

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Overview

The Parliamentary Inquiry into the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Victoria was established in 2016. The Economy and Infrastructure Committee undertook a detailed investigation into the way that RSPCA Victoria used its powers pursuant to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*, and the use of State Government funding by RSPCA Victoria.

The Victorian Government thanks the Committee for its report following the Inquiry. It also acknowledges the important contributions made by all stakeholders who participated in the Inquiry.

The Committee found that many of the issues presented were historical. Over time, a number of these have been resolved through the improved operating environment between the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) and RSPCA Victoria. In addition, RSPCA Victoria has responded to the 2016 *Independent Review of the RSPCA Victoria Inspectorate* and made substantial progress towards implementing the recommendations.

Response

Recommendation 1

That the Victorian Government and RSPCA Victoria provide more transparency, information, and detail with regard to the powers of RSPCA Victoria inspectors under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*, and in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between RSPCA Victoria and DEDJTR.

Government response: Support in full

The Victorian Government and RSPCA Victoria are collaborating in a number of areas to improve the transparency, and detail, of information available regarding the powers of RSPCA Victoria inspectors. Improved reporting systems between RSPCA Victoria and DEDJTR have already been adopted under the current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). These changes will deliver further detail regarding the activities of the RSPCA Victoria Inspectorate, and the use of government funding.

DEDJTR along with RSPCA Victoria, are considering the best options for developing, and designing resources to communicate the responsibilities of each organisation more clearly. The information on DEDJTR and RSPCA Victoria websites will be clarified and simplified to provide consistent guidance to community members reporting cruelty, as well as informing the community of the roles of each organisation.

The Victorian Government's Animal Welfare Action Plan contains commitments to review and clarify the enforcement roles of different authorised agencies, including RSPCA Victoria, as well as governance and funding structures. Future arrangements between RSPCA Victoria and DEDJTR will provide increased transparency, information and detail with regard to the use of powers of RSPCA Victoria inspectors under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (POCTA Act).

Recommendation 2

That RSPCA Victoria ensure that it investigates cruelty to commercial animals in emergency situations only, in line with Division 2 of Part 2A of *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

Government response: Support in full

The POCTA Act and the MoU between DEDJTR and RSPCA Victoria are clear regarding the requirement to provide services to alleviate animal pain and suffering. The current MoU defines the roles and responsibilities for both organisations with respect to commercial and non-commercial animals. It also states that under emergency situations “all inspectors ... may be required to respond to animal welfare incidents outside their areas of responsibility ... if there is a need to alleviate pain and suffering”.

Development of new operational agreements between RSPCA Victoria and DEDJTR will take into account, and give careful consideration to, this recommendation, whilst also ensuring that animal welfare is not disadvantaged in an emergency situation. DEDJTR and RSPCA Victoria will collaborate to develop resources to communicate the responsibilities of each organisation clearly. This will include clarifying the role of RSPCA Australia Approved Farming Scheme Compliance Officers so they are clearly differentiated from RSPCA Victoria Inspectors.

Recommendation 3

That RSPCA Victoria in consultation with the Victorian Government, consider ways to improve engagement and collaboration with animal stakeholder organisations.

Government response: Support in full

DEDJTR and RSPCA Victoria are working to develop new strategies to improve the engagement and collaboration with, and amongst, animal stakeholder organisations.

The Animal Welfare Action Plan (AWAP) provides an example of this approach. Two of the key pillars within the AWAP are ‘Collaboration’ and ‘Education’. The former will enhance cooperation across government and animal sectors, while the latter will assist with communication and training that improves knowledge, skills and compliance.

RSPCA Victoria will continue implementation of its Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy Strategy, which focuses on building engagement, trust and collaborating with a range of stakeholders.

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