

## **Inquiry into Animal Cruelty Laws Questions on Notice**

The Director  
Select Committee on animal cruelty laws in New South Wales  
Parliament House Macquarie Street Sydney NSW 2000  
By email: [AnimalCrueltyLaws@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:AnimalCrueltyLaws@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Friday 13 March 2019

**Dear Committee,**

I am grateful for the opportunity to answer all questions on notice and to provide the committee with additional information, and to expand upon or clarify my answers.

We are moving into a new era, where animals are no longer 'just animals' but are recognized as sentient<sup>1</sup> beings who are family members. Who are increasingly being recognized as constituting one of the groups within society who are most vulnerable and thus require additional protections. The evolution of the RSPCA is a good example of how our attitude towards animals and our treatment of them has improved over time. Likewise, the fact that this enquiry and similar enquiries are transpiring is testament to this gradual transformation of how we view and treat animals. As we become more enlightened as a society, we are realizing it is both compassionate and rational to care for and protect the defenseless, to enshrine this is law and to amend these laws as expectations and standards change.

### **Question 1**

*The Hon. EMMA HURST: From the perspective of a law student can you give us your thoughts about some of the key problems that you see in having a private charity enforcing criminal law?*  
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#### ***The Criminal Law***

The overarching issue is the enforcement of laws, specifically criminal law, and the entrustment of public duties to private organisations which do not have the necessary full spectrum of powers and do not operate under laws and standards related to transparency and accountability. Charitable organisations at present are not properly accountable to the community and they are not properly accountable to the government. The history of how this has arisen has been explored and elucidates why this model emerged<sup>2</sup>, in short, primarily due to the issue at first being outside the mainstream and the practical aspect of animals being unable to prosecute cases on their own behalf. The latter aspect is fixed and we will always have to carry out advancing and protecting the interests of animals on their behalf. However, how this is undertaken needs to be thoroughly revised to be brought into line with current societal standards and for there to be reasonable achievement of the goal to *prevent* cruelty to animals and seek justice where cruelty has occurred.

Criminal law and its enforcement are designated as the role of the executive branch of government within our democratic system. In order for anti-cruelty laws to achieve their objective, as with all criminal law, they require enforcement by a body with adequate funding and adherence to laws related to transparency, accountability and review.

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<sup>1</sup> Helen S Proctor, Gemma Carder and Amelia R. Cornish, 'Searching for animal sentience: A systematic review of the scientific literature' (2013) 3 *Animals* 882; Webster, J. *Animal Welfare, Limping towards Eden* (Wiley-Blackwell Oxford, UK, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> United Kingdom, The independent review of the prosecution activity of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 24 September 2014.

The RSPCA NSW and AWL NSW inspectors hold various coercive powers under anti-cruelty statutes and such power must be accompanied by the checks and balances ordinarily attached to such powers (even where they are limited as in this case). Importantly, approved charitable organisations are the few entities that can initiate court proceedings where there have been possible infractions of anti-cruelty laws. Such powers normally include disclosure of enforcement activities, releasing of detailed statistics and review mechanisms, as with the police force. So the question becomes, is it not incongruous that private organisations are essentially exempt from these laws and foundational standards.

To clarify, what is being pursued is not anything beyond the government's role, beyond the powers of other law enforcement bodies or beyond current expectations/standards – rather, fundamentally, what is being proposed is to bring the enforcement of animal cruelty laws into line with the enforcement of the rest of criminal law as it stands today. And thus to improve its function and feasibility of meeting its stated objectives.

### ***Transparency and Accountability***

Transparency and accountability are essential factors in the enforcement of law. At present, inspectors from the RSPCA and AWL are not held to the same level of scrutiny as other bodies that hold coercive powers, such as that of our police force.

Charitable organisations are either not covered or exempt from the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW), and administrative review under the *Administrative Decisions Review Act 1997* (NSW):

- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) section 4 Interpretation, private charities are not an 'agency' under the Act, thus it is apparent that they are not covered – and information pertinent to their activities cannot be accessed.
- *Administrative Decisions Review Act 1997* (NSW) section 9 stipulates that administrative decisions of an administrator are reviewable by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal if enabling legislation provides that applications may be made to the Tribunal for an administrative review under the ADR Act. There are no such provisions in the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (NSW).

The issues of transparency and accountability are also impediments to determining the scale of the problem and thus how to best rectify it. Specifically, information on why certain cases are not prosecuted cannot be obtained. For instance, cases that we are made aware of through the media and where evidence clearly indicates that a case warrants prosecution but the RSPCA has withdrawn and not satisfactorily explained why – or has simply not pursued the case at all with no reason provided. The AWL has not prosecuted any cases in the period 2017–2018, but it is doubtful that not a single case merited prosecution. Again, there is no means by which information can be obtained as to why cases are not seen through to prosecution or discontinued.

Overall, the statistics that are released are raw numbers, for instance the annual report for 2018–2019 RSPCA NSW provides the following:

77 prosecutions were stated to have commenced<sup>3</sup> but there is no further information on types of offences, the animals involved, or the specific outcomes. Further, no information about written notices or penalty notices is included in the report; however, charitable organisations are required to report on the numbers of these notices issued each year<sup>4</sup>, yet this is not being fulfilled.

Importantly, the RSPCA and AWL are the few bodies that have the power to initiate court proceedings – thus there is near complete reliance on those private organisations to fulfill the major objectives of animal cruelty laws. Simultaneously, although being tasked with carrying out public duties, they cannot be compelled to do so due to a lack of transparency and accountability.

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<sup>3</sup> 2018-19 Your Year in Review, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals NSW:  
[https://www.rspcansw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018-2019\\_Year-in-Review\\_Online.pdf](https://www.rspcansw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018-2019_Year-in-Review_Online.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Section 34B(3), POCTA Act and clauses 34(2)(e) and (f), Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2012 (NSW).

At present there powers are such that in practice they can discontinue a case with no consequences, the most prominent being the Wally's Piggery case. Or not proceed with a case at all, such as the case involving chickens and the overturned truck in Yass. There is also a question of whether species plays a role, for instance, if these incidents involved puppies and kittens, would the response have been different.

### ***Limited But Significant Powers***

RSPCA NSW and AWL NSW inspectors have limited powers that prevent proper enforcement. They do not have the powers necessary to carryout cover surveillance and therefore conduct undercover investigations, which are vital to law enforcement. Particularly in the agricultural and research industry where tens of millions of animals are kept far from public view and which are largely self-governing.

'The power to conduct routine inspections of commercial premises is vital to animal welfare, both because of the huge numbers of animals involved and the fact that the activity happens on private property, away from the public's gaze.'<sup>5</sup>

Prosecuted cases concerning farm animals, and some companion animals, have frequently been based on evidence gathered by third parties, rather than work undertaken by the RSPCA or AWL. And because inspectors cannot undertake undercover investigations and do not have the numbers for regular inspections, the current model makes it difficult to prevent cruelty – rather it is a reactive model which is triggered by complaints, as opposed to proactive actions to detect and prevent cruelty.

However, despite holding limited powers, the powers that they do possess are coercive and thus still warrant scrutiny. Further, transparency makes it impossible to accurately determine whether powers are being efficiently and impartially exercised. We know there is a failure but we need a more complete picture to determine the scale and devise appropriate responses.

Lastly, test cases cannot be carried out; test cases are important for testing of current law and to develop law. However, since private organisations are the few entities that can bring a prosecution and are struggling to achieve the objectives of POCTAA, it follows that test cases are simply not feasible.

### ***Conflicts of Interest***

There is also the issue of RSPCA NSW inspectors carrying out investigations on farms which produce products that carry the RSPCA Approved label. For instance in NSW footage was obtained from a farm which carries the RSPCA Approved label. Any reasonable person would be shocked by the footage<sup>6</sup>. Yet the only action that was taken was the issuing of penalty notices. Is it feasible that a prosecution by RSPCA NSW against the owners of the farm carrying the RSPCA Approved stamp could have proceeded?

### ***Funding***

Funding needs to be adequate to the task, in particularly as there are signals that this area is growing; this inquiry is evidence for the fact that this issue is highly important to the community and is becoming a fixture in the mainstream. It's inappropriate for private charitable fundraising and bequests to serve as the dominant source of funds for the enforcement of public law.

The very low number of inspectors, 32 for the RSPCA in comparison to tens of millions of animals<sup>7</sup>. While the AWL has fewer inspectors, approximately 19 (it was relayed to me that they were not very forthcoming about how many inspectors they employ).

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/other/liac/hot\\_topic/hottopic/2010/3/4.html?stem=0&synonyms=0&query=%20rspca%20nsw](http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/other/liac/hot_topic/hottopic/2010/3/4.html?stem=0&synonyms=0&query=%20rspca%20nsw)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.news.com.au/finance/business/pace-farm-denies-cruelty-to-chickens/news-story/ea7b807aeea7dba274e3857ed400a0f4>.

<sup>7</sup> For example, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics ("ABS"), in 2017-18 there were 30 million pigs, cattle and sheep in NSW: [https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/7121.0Main%20Features612017-18?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=7121.0&issue=2017-18&num=&view=.](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/7121.0Main%20Features612017-18?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=7121.0&issue=2017-18&num=&view=)

Overall, funding connects back to whether objectives of animal cruelty legislation can be attained. Without proper funding, the current model is unable to meaningfully carry out enforcement and, again, due to lack of transparency, there is insufficient information as to how broad the failings are.

### ***Expertise***

There is a question as to whether they have adequate training. While inspectors generally have excellent knowledge of animals and animal care, they might not have the same level of legal training as police officers. However, with any necessary additional training, I would posit that they could be an asset for an alternative model and could potentially be absorbed into a new body, provided they are entirely independent of the RSPCA or AWL.

### ***Comments on Funding***

I believe that one of the greatest obstacles or areas of concern is the issue of obtaining resources for an alternative model, such as an independent government body or specialised police taskforce. Societal standards are shifting, thus animal cruelty is no longer seen as involving 'just' animals who are lesser and therefore less deserving of care. We are also discovering that there is no clear demarcation between cruelty and violence towards humans and animals – the line is blurred and the issues strongly intertwined. A salient example of this recognition is that the FBI now collects information on animal cruelty alongside other serious criminal activity<sup>8</sup>. Thus, I believe the response by government needs to align with this to remain in touch with community expectations. And the links to other criminal activity and violence towards humans could provide a better understanding of the factors behind crime and avenues for earlier intervention and reduction of crime. We also have the advantage of various other similar jurisdictions as examples of how a new model can be implemented.

### ***Conflict of Interest – Department of Primary Industries***

I wanted to touch on the issue of the Department of Primary Industries (the DPI) playing a part in enforcement. DPI officers or any entity connected to the promotion of productivity in animal agriculture, carrying out any enforcement activity is unviable – there already exists a conflict of interest and perception of bias due to the DPI administering animal cruelty laws, drafting codes and attempting to promote two disparate policies – welfare and productivity. In fact, I posit that it is one of the greatest fears of those opposed to a shifting of powers – the fear that charitable organisations will lose their enforcement powers to the DPI or a similar body. The fear is so great that when I've had discussions with certain inspectors, nurses and animal attendants, they completely shut down and refuse to entertain the idea of a different model for fear that the DPI or equivalent will assume powers currently held by inspectors.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/-tracking-animal-cruelty>.

## Question 2

*The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Going back to the funding, you quote in there that the RSPCA has an operating cost budget of around \$50 million. When you look at what they spend on the inspectorate being \$6 million—and three and a bit million of that is on wages—I think we can all agree that the Government is not necessarily giving them enough to cover that \$6 million. But I struggle to reconcile how they can claim to be on Struggle Street when they have got an operating cost of \$50 million and getting donations of \$32.1 million. I think it speaks to some greater governance issues in how they manage their finances, potentially, across the board. Did you ever feel concerned about how money was being spent—not necessarily across the inspectorate but just in general?*

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What this inquiry has highlighted is that there is an issue with this image of a struggling charity, and that the issue might lie with how resources are used and distributed, and that there are legitimate concerns about management of funds. I recall that during the inquiry it was mentioned that it might be warranted that the RSPCA be annually audited in a similar way as other government departments. Given that they are entrusted with carrying out public duties, the vast sums of money involved and that animal lives are in the balance, this might be an appropriate avenue for better determining where issues exist and how they can be rectified.

Looking at the financial figures provided yearly, we are still dealing with rather raw numbers and there's no specific information on different branches and different departments within the organization. I would suggest that requiring more detailed information is necessary to determining how exactly funds are being spent. And this needs to be measured against less animals coming in and more animals being sent to other rescue groups.

For those of us on the front lines, animal attendants, veterinary nurses and veterinarians, we experienced chronic staff and resource shortage – precisely those areas that the community is expecting their donations to go towards. For instance inadequate staff numbers relative to animals, and no option for setting up mobile areas when there was insufficient space for animals or when dealing with peak times or outbreaks. Animals were all too frequently euthanized because there was insufficient space or money if they required surgeries, even standard procedures. And there was a continued absence of a proper quarantine area, which is a fundamental necessity in a shelter and leads to greater costs when ill animals infect other animals (although it has been said to me that the new shelter will finally contain a quarantine area). Thus for those of us working most closely with animals, it appeared we were indeed struggling.

In addition, there were a number of instances where staff conveyed concerns to me, things that I cannot corroborate but given the regular occurrence of these concerns, I believe it is indicative of a wider problem that requires further investigation.

It was relayed to me that certain staff enjoyed company cars and possible access to petrol cards. At the time this included the Director of Nursing (as of 2017 the role no longer exists), and other staff in supervisory roles, maintenance personnel and inspectors. This becomes a concern if staff is using cars outside of work, such as during days off, and for staff that have no need for work vehicles, such as those who do not regularly travel between shelters.

Certain colleagues mentioned concerns about how there was this development of a corporate sector within the organization, and during 2013, a number of people in higher paid positions were deemed redundant due to financial issues.

Another issue that was relayed to me by colleagues was the frequent upgrading of phones and iPads for inspectors that appeared unnecessary for carrying out their duties.

There were also assertions made by staff that Steve Coleman had mentioned that he wished to phase out the inspectorate due to how much the department cost.

A colleague who had previously worked as an accountant at a corporation confided in me that he felt that the RSPCA hospital could be better managed and potentially save large sums of money annually. Collectively, this indicates that there are problems with management of funds and greater scrutiny and transparency would give a more complete picture.

Fundamentally, money should go towards caring for animals and towards the salaries of those who are essential to fulfilling this. Administration staff are of course essential to the running of an organization so large but I think what is becoming apparent is that scrutiny of certain roles or departments within the RSPCA and the money going towards salaries for those types of roles warrant evaluation.

There was a sentiment of those 'upstairs', middle management and management, being out of touch with what was happening within the shelter and what needed to be done to improve things.

I would suggest that funds should not be taken away from the RSPCA (other than if they cease enforcing animal cruelty legislation), rather there needs to be more scrutiny to ensure funds are utilised correctly.

### **Question 3**

*The Hon. WALT SECORD: Many of my questions have been covered by the other participating members. But if I could take you back to some of your comments that it is inappropriate for charities to enforce criminal law, is that a philosophical view that you have or is it a conclusion that you reached when you worked at the RSPCA?*

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#### ***Witnessing the Failings of the Present Model while Employed at the RSPCA***

Through my work at the RSPCA I was introduced to and inspired to enter the law field in order to focus on animal law. Through working at the RSPCA I gained direct experience with how the current enforcement model works in practice and I came to learn of its serious failings. As animal attendants and nurses, we would care for the animals that were seized due to cruelty, abandonment by owners or cases where owners brought animals into the shelter that were in such a poor condition that they became cruelty cases. We would learn about the circumstances that lead to their seizure (subject to confidentiality protocols) and the outcomes of cases where prosecutions took place. I would learn about the legal process from inspectors and seek their views about the issues they continually confronted.

Over time the picture that emerged was one of a failing model and one failing animals - one where the objectives of animal cruelty laws were not possible to achieve, as charitable organisations cannot effectively enforce animal cruelty laws. Rather than preventing cruelty, often what was occurring was a reactive response once cruelty had already occurred, with inadequate resources to ensure cruelty didn't occur or repeat. This also resulted in wasting already scarce resources by not tackling the root cause of cruelty or undertaking early intervention, thus having little chance to effectively reduce the scale of the problem and, in addition, having to deal with repeat offenders.

#### ***Resource Lack and Management of Resources***

Lack of resources, or problems with management of funds, meant that inspectors were always working under a very heavy and unmanageable caseload. This meant that inspectors could not feasibly reach all animals in need and not in a timely manner.

Reaching animals in need sooner/early intervention and education are key factors to preventing cruelty and ultimately better than punishment if they are applied in such a way as to lead to prevention long term. However, due to an absence of the ability to regularly inspect facilities, it became apparent this was unfeasible. Further, there was limited opportunity for follow ups - if someone has been ordered to seek veterinary care for their animal, it's necessary to do several follow ups and a check a few months down the track to ensure people are still complying and understand that they're being monitored. This could not be carried out due to number of inspectors versus cases.

Due to lack of resources, the inspectorate was unable to monitor people whom had been banned from owning animals for a certain period. As an example, in 2014 there was a case involving the seizure of approximately 120 birds. It was relayed to me that they came from a pet shop owned or operated by an individual who had an order in place, banning him from owning any animals for several years.

There were also a few cases that were mentioned to me where certain perpetrators, breeders and owners/operators of security dog establishments, had not had any convictions recorded, yet were prosecuted multiple times.

Often no further action was taken where veterinary care was finally sought by the owner or where the person surrendered the animal. Apart from the aforementioned issues with this, resource shortage should not be the cause of not taking further action. Where there is a breach of the law, the proper process should be followed, including the laying of charges and prosecutions where the evidence indicates it is justified.

### ***Farm Animals***

I observed that there was absence of equal treatment of different animals, based on species. There was a scarcity of farm animal cases, despite most animals in NSW being farmed animals.

Further, inspectors did not appear to be able to act independently, having to refer to the DPI where cases involved farm animals. As noted in my original submission, there are requirements placed on inspectors in relation to 'stock animals' - inspectors are required to seek advice from the DPI prior to charging a person in relation to an offence of failing to provide a stock animal with sufficient food, drink, or shelter.

### ***Lack of Transparency***

I began to recognise that inspectors hold similar powers to police officers but the RSPCA did have to operate under the same level of scrutiny. I began to question why a private organization holds public duty powers and why the exercise of those powers is largely funded by charitable donations.

Commencing my law degree allowed me to apply a more critical framework to the current model and further informed my experiences.



## **Question 4**

*The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I wanted to ask you about the Animal Welfare Advisory Council. We heard yesterday from DPI that it has been in place, they are looking to restructure it, the process is open now for applications. I wanted to ask you how do you believe that that council could function better in the system generally under the current structure, or under any proposed different structure in the future?*  
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### **1) Use of and Sourcing of Scientific Evidence**

The primary role of the Animal Welfare Advisory Council is 'to provide expert advice to the NSW Government on animal welfare matters and proposed regulations'. Animal welfare matters entail veterinary science, animal science and behavioural science. So it follows that an integral element, whether under the current structure or future proposed structure, is the application of rigorous standards to all evidence that is permitted to be used as a basis for expert advice.

The use of scientific evidence must, unequivocally, be peer-reviewed, unbiased and balanced, and meta-analysis should be included wherever possible. There must be stringent rules that will prevent the use of non-peer-reviewed, outdated/debunked research, cherry picked research or any reports funded by or connected to the agricultural industry. Any evidence used cannot in any way be affiliated with the animal agricultural industry or the companion animal breeding industry – this is not going beyond accepted principles or standards, it is simply a basic principle of avoiding conflict of interest and bias. In addition, bias is something that frequently is held by individuals unknowingly, hence why safeguards such as peer-reviewed and conflict of interest processes are in place. Thus, in my view, stringent criteria should be developed for the sourcing of any evidence and any research that does not meet all the criteria would not be permitted for inclusion.

In the words of my learned colleagues who are better qualified to speak on this issue:

‘Expert advice should, ideally, be based on scientific merit and research, and that research should be peer-reviewed, unbiased and supported by other research. Basing decisions on peer reviewed research ensures that the findings are both generated and reviewed by subject matter experts. Utilising research that is not reviewed risks basing decisions on poorly designed studies, incorrect findings, or biased research. The review process helps identifies flaws in experimental or research design, which can lead to incorrect findings. Review can also help identify biases contained within research - it is also essential that researches disclose sources of funding or interests that may influence the research or findings.

A systemic review of data can be performed to find a consensus and broader understanding of an area of research. Utilising statistical analysis during these reviews produces a meta-analysis of the existing research that can quantify the validity of previous findings. A systematic review can identify outlying results that are inconsistent with other research. As all research can be affected by chance, corroborating research and replication studies should be performed to confirm the veracity of findings.

Decision makers should be encouraged to be aware of recent research, to ensure that decisions are based on current findings. No area of scientific study is stationary, and this prevents basing decisions on out dated knowledge.’<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Step Wallace, Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) completing at Charles Sturt University Wagga Wagga.

‘In order to make well informed decisions on critical matters, such as policies, one needs to approach the subject with the ability to utilise and objectively examine the existing wealth of information provided by researches in the specified field. Reference to current literature and research should set the foundation upon which one builds their analysis. Scientific methodology is based on systematic observation and experimentation, inductive and deductive reasoning, and the formation and testing of hypotheses and theories with the ultimate aim of achieving an impartial, comprehensively examined conclusion. It provides an objective, systematic standardized approach to evaluating datasets leading to improved results. These results can be further strengthened and validated via peer assessed reproducibility. It is critical to promote a culture that encourages substance over impact. A system relies on expert advice and reasoning. It is imperative to strive for impartiality and to avoid cognitive bias for data credibility. Often decision makers pick and choose the research that supports their predetermined objectives, siding with outliers over more transparent, well researched, evidence-based reliable data that might be contradictory to their cause. Policy makers cannot afford to be uninformed or uncertain as they have the responsibility to adhere to principles that prevent the projection of misleading, false results that do not have benefits to society as a whole.’<sup>10</sup>

## ***2) Council Structure***

Council membership should consist of individuals of various ages to ensure they are in touch with current science and best practice – I, and some of my colleagues, have unfortunately encountered welfare concerns where veterinarians have not kept in touch with current practices, do not apply current pain relief regimes and have a general reluctance to modernize. It would be beneficial to have a mechanism that ensures that members remain up to date with developments in their field – referred to as further education for endured vocational training and competency as advised by my colleagues.

Veterinarians or members with an animal science background ideally should not have any ties to the agricultural or breeding industry, as any connection, causes conflict of interest or a perception of a conflict of interest.

I would put an emphasis on veterinarians who have worked in a shelter environment – they generally have broader knowledge and experience due to the various cases they see, the volumes of animals they treat and the urgent cases they confront.

Members with a qualification in animal behavior should have a tertiary qualification, as opposed to a college level qualification. I have worked with colleagues who have had both types of qualifications and those with a tertiary qualification had vastly more knowledge and understood the importance of remaining up to date and why peer-reviewed literature is crucial.

## ***3) Greater Diversity and Balance of Stakeholders***

This point also connects to the above point. A diversity of stake holders is vital to ensure preventing an overrepresentation of members with a similar background i.e. having an overrepresentation of members who have had ties to the animal agricultural industry or companion animal breeding industry.

Working in the animal care industry for over a decade, I witnessed terrible cruelty cases involving breeders and cared for countless animals who suffered as a result of the genetic defects caused by breeding.

Providing expert advice on animal welfare matters, the mandate of the council, has to be divorced from productivity so that the council can focus freely on welfare and not be hampered by productivity/profits, which is already the remit of other government departments.

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<sup>10</sup> Katayoun Kianian, IVF Scientist, Bachelor of Science and Biotechnology, Masters of Science in Reproductive Medicine.