



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL CRUELTY LAWS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

INDEPENDENT OFFICE OF ANIMAL PROTECTION RECOMMENDED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4 June 2020

A NSW Upper House committee inquiring into animal cruelty laws in New South Wales today tabled its report, urging the government to establish an independent statutory body, the Independent Office of Animal Protection, to oversight the animal welfare framework.

The Chair of the Committee, the Hon Mark Pearson MLC, said: "This inquiry has demonstrated that the status quo is no longer acceptable in terms of animal welfare in this state, with two approved charitable organisations, the RSPCA NSW and Animal Welfare League NSW, responsible for promotion of welfare and the investigation and prosecution of acts of animal cruelty. The committee therefore recommended that a fully funded specialist unit within the Police Force be established to investigate and prosecute animal cruelty offences".

A significant issue raised during the inquiry was the need to reform the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* to better meet growing community understanding of animal sentience and expectations about animal welfare. Concerns were also raised about the inherent conflict of interest in having the same government department responsible for both animal welfare and the use of animals for agricultural production purposes.

Mr Pearson said: "We support an approach whereby the government consolidates and streamlines various pieces of related legislation to create a simpler legislative framework. The committee has recommended that the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* and the animal welfare framework that supports be overhauled to reflect modern knowledge and practices regarding the treatment of animals".

During the inquiry, participants questioned the appropriateness of the current funding model for the two approved charitable organisations whereby the RSPCA NSW and AWL NSW heavily rely on donations and only receive limited annual government grants for their compliance and enforcement functions.

Mr Pearson continued, "Based on the evidence, the committee recommended that the government significantly increase funding to more adequately resource and staff the RSPCA NSW and AWL NSW inspectorates to enable them to effectively perform their compliance and enforcement role and conduct regular inspections without reliance on charitable donations commencing next financial year".

The report also makes recommendations to increase penalties for animal cruelty offences, and improve the transparency and accountability of the actions of the RSPCA NSW and AWL NSW by recommending that they table their annual reports with both Houses of Parliament and attend an annual public hearing with a Legislative Council Portfolio Committee to answer questions about their compliance and enforcement responsibilities under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.



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For a full copy of the committee's report and other inquiry documents please visit the committee's webpage: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/animalcrueltylaws

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Mark Pearson MLC, on 9230 2445 or 0428 444 132.