

The Hon. Catherine Cusack MLC
Chair, Standing Committee on State Development
NSW Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000.

Submission via email

Dear Ms Cusack,

During public hearings on March 21 concerning Animal Welfare Policy in NSW when discussing the regulation of animal research you enquired as to the background to the development of the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (the Code) and how it relates to international standards.

As Chair of the NSW Animal Research Review Panel (1986-2010) I represented the NSW Minister responsible for the *Animal Research Act* (1985) on the national committee, convened by the NH&MRC, which was responsible for the revisions of the Code in 1990, 1997 and 2004. The NHMRC invited me to join this committee for the 2013 revision of the Code as a person with "expertise in development of international animal ethics and welfare guidelines".

The Code is effectively the overarching national policy concerning the use of animals for scientific purposes in Australia being incorporated into legislation in all states and territories and relates to the use of animals for the purposes of research, teaching and product testing in the fields of medical, agricultural/veterinary and environmental studies. The national sponsors of the Code are the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Australian Research Council (ARC), Universities Australia (formerly Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee) and CSIRO.

First published in 1969 the Code is a living document being revised in 1979, 1983, 1985, 1990, 1997, 2004 and 2013; changes reflecting community expectations and scientific advances (Rose & Grant, 2013).

The NHMRC has responsibility for the arrangements for revisions of the Code and prior to the 1990 revision established formal processes whereby for each revision a Code Advisory Group is established with representatives of the sponsors, RSPCA (Australia), Animals Australia, and state and territory governments. There is a staged review process with an initial targeted consultation of key stakeholders that informs the development of a revised draft document that is released for public consultation with the final version taking into consideration all submissions. The Code Advisory Group reviews all submissions and is actively involved in the development of the final document that is considered for endorsement by the Code sponsors. It should be noted that through this process, cognizant of the status of the Code in state and territory legislation, the aim has been for the Code to be an overarching document that would enable different jurisdictions to amend legislation where necessary to accommodate specific legislative requirements.

The purpose of the Code throughout its history has been to promote the humane and responsible care and use of animals for scientific purposes and, with the 1979 version, together with Canada and Sweden, Australia was one of the first countries to require ethical review of these activities. All subsequent versions of the Code have developed the framework for ethical review that is consistent with international standards as reflected in the *International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals* (CIOMS/ICLAS, 2012), This joint publication by the Council for International Organizations of Medical Research (CIOMS) and the International Council for Laboratory Animal Science (ICLAS) draws on the policies and guidelines of some 30 countries

(including Australia), and by establishing the international benchmark for the principles we should apply in the conduct of these activities, provides a framework for the development of national laws, policies and guidelines. I was invited to be the Australian representative on the committee that developed these guidelines.

It is notable that in the nine years since the publication of the 8th edition of the Code with developments in the EU and, more recently USA, there have been significant changes internationally in acceptance of ethical review of animal research. Never the less, a review of these changes and associated policies and guidelines will establish that the principles of the Code are contemporaneous with international developments. As a personal note I wish to add that through being invited to participate in recent international workshops in the USA¹ and Canada² that sought to explore emerging ethical issues in relation to animal research I am very much aware how highly the Code is regarded in many countries.

I have outlined my understanding of the key issues relevant to your enquiry and hope this information is of assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Rose

Attachments:

- *Australia's ethical framework for when animals are used for scientific purposes*. M. Rose and E. Grant, 2013, *Animal Welfare*, 22:315-322.
- *International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals*, CIOMS/ICLAS, 2012

¹*Developing Standardized Policies: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Factors Relevant to Ethical Considerations Regarding the Use of Animals in Research*, Georgetown University Washington DC. 2012.

²*International Workshop on Governance of Animal Research*, University of British Columbia, Canada, 2013