

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Thanks to you both for appearing today. You spoke earlier about the rehoming amendments. My understanding is that we have the longest in the country, being seven days. Is that right?

MICHAEL RYAN: I'm not fully aware of some of the other States and Territories but, in saying that—

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Some of them don't have a minimum stay. It's interesting to see because, on the one hand, some of the submissions we've received in this inquiry state that that seven days should be lower, and some of them say that it should be removed. I'm just wondering if you could share your thoughts.

MICHAEL RYAN: I personally, from my own experience as an authorised officer of 17 councils—getting hold of Joe Bloggs who owned that dog three years ago and got rid of it to the next-door neighbour's kid, who was only seven at the time and who's now 23, takes a bit of time. I think your seven-day or eight-day period is quite sufficient. I wouldn't like, personally—and Troy may disagree—to go under that. I think we need that time. Do we need extra time? The extra time then comes about by, then, the emails going out to the rehoming groups et cetera.

I might say, at this point, our experience with the rehoming groups—both in Queensland; South Australia, where we operate out of Broken Hill; and Victoria—are wonderful, but they're hitting a saturation point. They're not mentally trained for, let's say, rehoming fatigue, for want of the wording. We've actually had one. I will mention not the lady's name, but AWL Queensland. She has come back off three months. She was moving anywhere between, from Moree, 20-odd dogs per fortnight, back through to Glen Innes, probably taking around 40 to 50 animals a week. Unfortunately, she had to have three months—

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: She is taking dogs from New South Wales to Queensland?

MICHAEL RYAN: Correct. We will deal with whoever we've got to. It's as simple as that. As you would have heard in the earlier submission, they all have their rehoming groups, and I applaud them all generally. There's a few that are a bit shonky, but we will deal with those as they come. We don't mind if they make a million dollars out of it. They aren't making a million dollars. As long as they do the right thing by the animal, do the paperwork, we're happy. We have found with some of our northern areas into Queensland, AWL especially, have been tremendous.

TROY McGLYNN: Further to the question about the minimum holding periods, certainly within the New South Wales jurisdiction in which we operate it is seven and 14 days, depending on whether a notice can be served. But two observations. One is that it has remained unchanged since the late 1970s where the legislation has come in, but obviously we have much more improved and streamlined communication means nowadays. Secondly, it is also a symptom of the outcome. It's about being able to get in touch and identify the owners, and about having up-to-date details. It's about dealing with those issues first, and the minimum holding period really then becomes almost a moot point.

MICHAEL RYAN: Agreed.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: We have heard other evidence this morning about the difficulties in getting in contact with some of those AROs, particularly from one council who said that 90 per cent don't reply. It is interesting that we are moving then interstate to try and find organisations. I just wanted to ask both of you if you could provide your take on the role of the RSPCA in terms of the compliance activities it is tasked to undertake on behalf of the State Government, and whether or not that is of a quality that is appropriate and unbiased?

MICHAEL RYAN: I may declare an interest there. In regards to Dubbo council previously, that officer is one of my people who have seconded to RSPCA. I may have a biased point of view—and I don't want them to keep him either. But from my point of view, and I have developed this over 26 years, the RSPCA are an integral tool and source. There are some very good people in there, very good. They concentrate a lot on your closer city metro areas, and that's fine; that's where the population is. They are under a lot of stress. I have three personal friends who are RSPCA inspectors. We as officers in the field—and we are the front line, unfortunately—will do a lot of their work for them—i.e. ascertaining the complaints, going out, having a look, "I am here under the auspices of the RSPCA."

Yes, everything can be improved across the board. I think they are very diligent, the experience that I have had with probably 20-odd officers, and I know team leaders and that as well. From our point of view, they are increasing the numbers. That will help a lot. I would not like to see us have anything to do with welfare. People, the community, don't understand that; however, I think that puts another level of angst and stress onto our people. Let's face it, no-one wakes up of a morning wanting to become a ranger for the rest of their lives. Street cleaners get paid as much.

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