

## Karen Davies Supplementary Q & A

### 1. Please provide the date (by year reference) you were employed by RSPCA NSW and NSW AWL.

I started work with RSPCA NSW in Feb 1984, resigned and finished March/April 2015. Started with AWL NSW April 2015, made redundant and finished June 2018.

### 2. What were your primary responsibilities in each of these roles, and how did your duties evolve over your tenure at both organisations?

At RSPCA I started as an Animal Attendant and worked in both Yagoona Shelter & Yagoona Vet Clinic, became a Team Leader (Approx. 1986) and then Supervisor (Approx. 1987) working mainly in the Holding Room (animals in and out of shelter), Treatment room (shelter animals in care, incoming, injured animals, emergencies), Switchboard and Reception (customer care – incoming & outgoing – surrenders, strays, adoptions, reclaims). Became Shelter Manager (early 1990's) at Yagoona shelter. Was also workers compensation officer for RSPCA NSW. Shelter Manager position was then changed to 4 Shelter Supervisors under Animal Care Exec Manager, I was one of the 4. Then went to part time payroll/accounts, part time shelter supervisor. Then went to POOPs (Pets Of Older Persons), community outreach and clinic manager PA, whilst still continuing to do accounts/payroll. Then went to Community Outreach Programs team and Linic Manager PA but stayed doing workers comp and payroll whilst in this role. Was still in this role when I resigned.

At AWL NSW - I started as Shelter Manager at Kemps Creek, was then put as Chief Operating Officer – overseeing shelters, branches and Inspectorate and was in this role until finishing.

### 3. Have you had any direct contact with RSPCA NSW senior management since you ceased employment?

No, I have not.

### 4. Have you had any direct contact with NSW AWL senior management since you ceased employment?

No, I have not.

### 5. What qualifications do you hold?

Animal Technicians Certificate	(TAFE)	1988
Effective Supervision & Team Leadership	(Employers' Advisory Service)	1997
Managing Grievances & Disputes	(Employers Federation)	2000
Rehabilitation Coordinator	(WorkCover)	2000
WHS Risk Management	(WorkCover)	2002
WHS Consultation	(WorkCover)	2005
Microsoft Excel	(Dynamic Web Training)	2009
MYOB	(ITC Australia)	2009
Meridian Migration	(Sage MicrOpay)	2010
Meridian	(Sage MicrOpay)	2010
Managing Injured Worker & Upgrading	(Rehab One)	2010
Selected duties		
Effective Management	(Pathways)	2014

Managing Effective Teams	(TAFE)	2017
Managing Quality Customer Service	(TAFE)	2017
EmpLive Full Application & Admin Training	(EmpLive)	2018
One Welfare Conference	(Sydney University)	2019
Mental Wellbeing Symposium	(Sydney University)	2019
Easy to WHS	(SafeWork)	2022

**6. What is your current employer and position?**

Dural Veterinary Hospital, Practice Manager

**7. Given that the inquiry relates to the 2022/23 financial year, do you have any recent examples of personal involvement with RSPCA NSW?**

I am a life member of both organisations and regularly review the annual report and financials and have attended some AGMs for both organisations since leaving.

**8. In 2019 you submitted to a similar inquiry that both AWL and RSPCA NSW were doing the best they could with limited funding. What accounts for the change in your view that there is an insurmountable conflict of interest?**

I still believe that 98% of the people employed and volunteering for both organisations do the best that they can but, although there are policies and procedures to follow, all of these are able to be overridden by Executive Management and in some cases the Board. As I have previously stated, the biggest issue is definitely who is in charge of either/both organisations at the time.

**9. You mentioned conflicts of interest in prosecutorial decisions. Can you provide detailed evidence of specific cases in which this conflict influenced the outcome?**

I am loathe to provide names of persons persecuted as I do not want to cause further upset/distress. But in both organisations there was most certainly concerns with regards to personal relationships to either Board members and/or Executive Management. Volunteers, Foster Carers, Ex-staff and Rescue Groups.

Legal counsel was provided at RSPCA NSW by two (2) Board members whilst they were on the Board, prosecuting cases on behalf of the RSPCA NSW.

In both organisations there were also occasions when prosecutions were not undertaken because of the resource drain to do so – i.e. hoarder cases where the cost of housing, feeding, having staff and veterinary costs and high likelihood of euthanasia as the final outcome for many of these animals, whilst undertaking what was likely to be a long-term legal battle was deemed to be too costly. Or conversely animals were taken into custody because they were highly adoptable with a great story behind them (for media/fundraising opportunities), and the person being prosecuted was unlikely to proceed to a legal dispute and would rather surrender the animals into the care of the organisation for likely rehoming.

**10. During your time at the RSPCA, were you ever involved in discussions or decisions that could have been perceived as a conflict of interest? How were these handled?**

Not directly that I can recall.

**11. You mentioned a 'toxic culture' at the RSPCA under certain leadership; can you provide detailed examples of policies or decisions that contributed to this culture?**

With regard to bullying and harassment claims, staff were told to 'sort it out between themselves' and were given little, to no support or guidance on how to do so. This was also very problematic when the person making the claim was often a subordinate to a manager who would make their working life more difficult (in what is already a difficult work environment) and resulted in stress claims and high staff turnover. Staff turnover is already fairly high within these organisations as depending on the role being performed it is physically, mentally and emotionally demanding and having to work in a toxic workplace just makes it that much harder.

*\*Please see attached policies and documents*

**12. How did you personally respond to or challenge this culture during your time in management? Did you take any steps to formally address these issues through internal processes?**

Yes, in writing and in many discussions. *\*Again, please see attached*

**13. Could the unpleasantness you experienced have been influenced by personal disagreements or conflicts rather than systemic issues within the organisation?**

If it had just been me, then possibly (and certainly with one particular manager), but there were multiple staff with multiple instances over an extended period of time. Many staff resigned (some forced out) because of ongoing issues.

**14. Can you provide detailed evidence, such as documents or communications, to substantiate your claims of financial inefficiency?**

*\*Please see attached employment lists and pay rates/areas of work. As noted the most blatant was the RSPCA NSW Events department*

**15. You mentioned being involved in payroll and accounting; did you ever formally report your concerns about financial practices to the board or external auditors? What was the outcome?**

I have raised concerns with direct management, the CEO and at the AGMs of both organisations. Little to no feedback. Both organisations had payroll audits and had to make amendments.

**16. Can you clarify how the allocation of funds directly impacted animal welfare negatively during your tenure?**

There were occasions when animals were not given sufficient, suitable bedding because of a lack of funds. There were also cases with animals not being treated (although they could have been) because of a lack of funds, i.e. animals surrendered or brought in as injured strays that had perhaps a fracture that could have been repaired but was not and the animal was euthanased or the limb amputated as the cheaper option.

**17. How do you differentiate between strong management decisions and what you characterised as bullying?**

There always needs to be a set of policies, rules that people are expected to adhere to. I understand that not all decisions will suit everyone (as a Manager myself I have certainly implemented unpopular policies and procedures), but, there needs to be clear reason and open consultation and discussion if questions are raised, not just an attitude of 'I am in charge, do what you're told and don't question me'.