

# Questions on Notice



NSW Parliamentary Inquiry – PC4

April 2026

2025 inquiry into the operation of the approved charitable organisations under the POCTA ACT

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Please see below NSW Farmers' response to Questions on Notice as set out in the transcript from the hearing on Thursday 2 April 2026.

Question on Notice	Topic: Independent Office of Animal Welfare
<p><b>The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:</b> We've also heard a bit this morning about this promise to have the independent office of animal welfare. What engagement have you had with the Minister about how this is going</p> <p><b>ROB McINTOSH:</b> Our firm stance on the independent office of animal welfare is that we don't believe it's necessary. It's a body that would sit well outside the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development, which is very much our preferred sector to work with and has been over many years.</p> <p><b>The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:</b> And your engagement with the Minister on this?</p> <p><b>LIZZIE SARKS:</b> Again, probably just reiterating, we have really strong policy that we don't support an independent office of animal welfare. Rob and I probably wouldn't be able to speak to the exact specifics of the nature of our engagement with the Ministers. That sits across other areas of our team, but happy to take that question on notice as well and provide some more details back to the Committee.</p>	
<p><b>NSWFA Response</b></p> <p>NSW Farmers has had direct engagement with the Minister for Agriculture on matters relating to animal welfare, including the Independent Office of Animal Welfare. This matter was raised in meetings with the Minister on 12 August 2024 and 7 August 2025.</p>	

Question on Notice	Topic: Fair Work Commission
<p><b>The CHAIR:</b> With regard to the RSPCA, the Fair Work Commission actually determined that the RSPCA satisfies the requirement to be a trading entity given that 50 per cent of its income is derived from business. With that in mind, do you believe that they no longer fit the description of an ACO under the Act? I'm happy for you to take that on notice and perhaps get a—</p> <p><b>LIZZIE SARKS:</b> If that's all right, we will take that on notice. We probably don't have all the information for you here today on that one.</p>	
<p><b>NSWFA Response</b></p>	

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NSW Farmers is not in a position to comment on whether or not the decision by the Fair Work Commission legally impacts the definition and status of an ACO. However, it does again speak to our concerns about the appropriateness of charities being the enforcement agencies under POCTAA.

Question on Notice	Topic: Meetings with Minister for Agriculture
<p><b>The Hon. EMMA HURST:</b> Can I ask when you last requested a meeting with the Minister and whether the Minister agreed to a meeting with you guys?</p> <p><b>LIZZIE SARKS:</b> If that's all right to take that one on notice—again, a lot of that information sits across layers of our organisation. I'd want to get the correct information to you.</p> <p><b>The Hon. EMMA HURST:</b> Please, and also how many times you may have requested meetings over the past, say, six months, if that's not too much work, and then how many—</p> <p><b>LIZZIE SARKS:</b> Sorry, Ms Hurst, in relation to—</p> <p><b>The Hon. EMMA HURST:</b> In relation to meeting with the Minister, in regard to any work that you have going forward with the Minister. I don't need to know the—</p> <p><b>The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:</b> The president, or who from the organisation?</p> <p><b>The Hon. EMMA HURST:</b> Anyone from within the organisation—not specific, but anyone within the organisation that has requested a meeting and has had a meeting with the Minister as well and she has agreed to that. That would be great.</p> <p><b>LIZZIE SARKS:</b> We'll take that on notice.</p>	
<p><b>NSWFA Response</b></p> <p>Any NSW Farmers policy meetings that have been held with the Minister are published in her diary, and NSW Farmers would refer the Committee here for these specific details.</p>	

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Question on Notice	Topic: Oversight with the NSW Ombudsman
<p><b>The Hon. EMMA HURST:</b> With the recent change, there were reforms brought in to make sure that the two charities had oversight with the NSW Ombudsman. Is that something that NSW Farmers were supportive of?</p> <p><b>LIZZIE SARKS:</b> I'm happy to take that question on notice, if you'd like, and we'll come back with some more information for you.</p>	
<p><b>NSWFA Response</b></p> <p>As NSW Farmers has noted in our submission and during the hearing, transparency of and trust in activities is vital.</p> <p>We acknowledge the intent of these recent changes. NSW Farmers policy recognises there is a role for government authorities that have no actual or apparent conflict of interest.</p> <p>NSW Farmers supports that inspection and enforcement powers under NSW animal welfare legislation must be held by government authorities that have no actual or apparent conflict of interest in fulfilling this role.</p>	

Question on Notice	Topic: RSPCA Code of Conduct and decision deferrals to vets
<p><b>The CHAIR:</b> Just picking up on your comment that often the inspectors don't have that core knowledge they need around livestock animals—I know you don't want to see the RSPCA do the enforcement. But if that model doesn't change, would you like it written into their operating procedures that if they don't have that knowledge then they must defer to a vet for assessment—whether it's the farmer's vet or another vet—rather than making up their own arbitrary position on the condition of that animal?</p> <p><b>ROB McINTOSH:</b> I'm understanding that it's the advice of vet practice that you—</p> <p><b>The CHAIR:</b> Yes. If they don't have that knowledge, which many of them don't, would you like to see it written into the RSPCA's code of conduct or practice that they must defer a decision to a vet?</p> <p><b>LIZZIE SARKS:</b> Would you mind if we take that question on notice? NSW Farmers has a lot of different policies and layers that sit around that, so I just want to make sure we give you the right information on that.</p>	

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## NSWFA Response

NSW Farmers notes that the Chair has acknowledged in his question our position that we don't support charities as the enforcement agencies under POCTAA.

A concern of NSW Farmers is that if this was written into the RSPCA's code, it could have an unintended consequence of worsening animal welfare outcomes if a qualified livestock and large animal vet is not available to make an assessment when needed, as well as worsening the workforce and mental health pressures being raised by regional and rural vets.

Question on Notice	Topic: Stock Welfare Panels
<p><b>The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:</b> Can I come back to the stock welfare panels. Someone suggested this morning contradictory views on what NSW Farmers thought of stock welfare panels. I just wondered if we could get a view from farmers, either now or on notice, about how that is working and how you see all the interactions as far as stock welfare panels are concerned.</p> <p><b>ROB McINTOSH:</b> I'm not sure what contradiction you're referring to, so I guess we'd have to take that on notice.</p> <p><b>The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:</b> Yes, that's why I'm just asking what your views are on it—so we are clear what NSW Farmers thinks of the stock welfare panels.</p> <p><b>ROB McINTOSH:</b> I'm not sure that's relevant to what we're here for, so I'm happy to take that on notice and refer back to you.</p>	
<h2>NSWFA Response</h2> <p>NSW Farmers is supportive of Stock Welfare Panels and the role they play in improving animal welfare outcomes while ensuring procedural fairness and practical, early intervention for livestock producers. We consider Stock Welfare Panels an important mechanism for addressing emerging animal welfare concerns in a collaborative, on-farm and solution-focused way, before matters escalate to enforcement action. NSW Farmers supports our member inclusion on Stock Welfare Panels to provide practical livestock expertise.</p>	