

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF PRIMATES AND OTHER ANIMALS
IN MEDICAL RESEARCH IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 31 March 2022

Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

I am a University Veterinarian / Animal Welfare Officer employed by a Group of Eight University. I am writing this on my own behalf as an individual submission and not as a submission from my employer.

I have worked as a veterinarian in private practice and industry, as well as an animal welfare veterinarian in research institutions and have extensive experience with the current mechanisms to safeguard animal welfare in a research setting, including the Animal Ethics Process and the 2013 Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes. I have also completed a research based Masters and a PhD which utilised animals, so have experienced the process from a researchers perspective as well as an animal welfare veterinarians perspective.

My main comment is that there is a fallacy that there is a range of suitable non-animal models currently available (or soon to be available) that could be used in place of animals for research and testing. There are some terrific non-animal models and this area is rapidly changing. However, the functioning of the body and its symbiosis with microorganisms is complex and poorly understood and therefore in many cases cannot be effectively modeled without animals. For example, we still have a poor understanding of how the brain works, its interaction with the immune system is even more poorly understood and how that interaction is impacted by gastrointestinal microorganisms is still widely unknown. While an animal model may not be a perfect model, as it is not a human, in many circumstances it is still a much better model than a non-animal model as a hypothesis can be examined in conjunction with the unknown. Non-animal models, rightly, should be used where possible, but when we do not understand the normal functioning of body processes, let alone their dysfunction (disease), the expectation that we can somehow create non-animal models that will soon be able to replace all animal models and provide meaningful scientific outcomes is wrong. We cannot effectively model what we don't understand.

Furthermore, facts that state that the majority of pre-clinical animal trials does not pass clinical trials ignores the fact that a failure to achieve your aims is not a failure or an indication the science was bad. A negative result is still a good result as it increases our body of knowledge and provides a building block for future success - the concept that a researcher stands on the shoulder of giants.

In recognition that good science is good animal welfare (as poor science invalidates the use of the animals), my experience is that while increased regulations and reporting requirements can appear sensible on paper, in some cases they can be a box ticking exercise with no real value, lacking nuance and misapplying resources that could be more directly used for improving animal welfare. As such they can be antagonistic, impeding rather than achieving good animal welfare. I have found the best animal welfare is achieved when veterinarians and animal technicians form good working relationships with researchers, understand what they want to achieve and work with them to maximise animal welfare and perform good science. My main recommendation would be to ensure veterinarians are embedded in institutions using animals for scientific purposes.

There is already in place an exhaustive mechanism to safeguard animal welfare in a scientific setting. I think the current mechanism is suitable and sufficient. Society tends to demonise people who are involved in the use of animals for scientific purposes, despite the vast majority being ordinary people with a deep affection and commitment to animals who have shouldered the burden of performing a task most people don't want to do, for the benefit of all in society. It would be great if the inquiry provides a mechanism to positively recognise those who have risked their own mental health and potentially ostracisation to help all.

Regards