

**Submission
No 4**

**INQUIRY INTO 2023 INQUIRY INTO THE OPERATION
OF THE APPROVED CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS
UNDER THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
ACT 1979**

Name: Laura Turner

Date Received: 20 February 2024

I am writing to submit my concerns regarding the enforcement practices of the RSPCA, particularly in collaboration with WIRES, under the POCTA act. My submission focuses on the RSPCA's methods of enforcement with a particular emphasis on volunteer wildlife rehabilitators. Firstly, it is important to note that my intention is not to insinuate any wrongdoing by any individual or organisation involved. However, there are significant concerns among volunteer wildlife rehabilitators regarding the actions taken by the RSPCA when matters are referred to them by WIRES. Of particular concern is the increasingly close relationship between WIRES and the RSPCA, which has raised questions about independent due process. WIRES, despite not being an enforcement agency, has implemented 'routine facilities inspections' on volunteer members, carried out by a new Welfare Team predominantly comprised of ex-RSPCA employees. This raises concerns about conflicts of interest and impartiality. The people conducting the inspections also have no experience in wildlife care and volunteer work. Furthermore, the case of a highly experienced ex-WIRES carer highlights some of these concerns. The carer, with almost a decade of experience in wildlife rehabilitation, is facing serious charges of 'aggravated cruelty' following a referral from the WIRES Welfare Team to the RSPCA. The handling of this case, including the lack of communication with the carer and the swift action taken by the RSPCA, raises questions about procedural fairness and natural justice. Additionally, the lack of transparency and accountability in both WIRES and RSPCA decision-making processes is concerning, especially considering their status as charitable organisations reliant on public donations. There is a need for greater scrutiny into the referrals made by WIRES and the basis upon which RSPCA raids are conducted on behalf of WIRES. In conclusion, there is a pressing need for this inquiry to investigate whether the RSPCA is acting on legitimate concerns for wildlife or relying on unsubstantiated information from WIRES. Volunteers deserve better treatment and clearer protocols to ensure procedural fairness and transparency in enforcement actions. Thank you for considering my submission.