

Submission
No 22

**INQUIRY INTO 2025 INQUIRY INTO THE OPERATION OF
THE APPROVED CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS UNDER
THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT 1979**

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Submission to 2025 inquiry into the operation of the approved charitable organisations under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979

I am very concerned about the relationship between the RSPCA and WIRES. It is broadly known that the CEO of WIRES has a personal background of employment with RSPCA, and that other staff in WIRES have been recruited from RSPCA. In itself this MAY not be an issue. However there are so many stories emerging of the RSPCA being called in to do inspections on wildlife carers for no apparent reason, or with very flimsy justification, and without any due process within WIRES itself.

Many times these “inspections” occur on wildlife carers who have voiced concerns about WIRES management or who WIRES have taken a dislike to for some unclear reason. WIRES has its own processes for overseeing animal welfare, beginning with the Branch Species Coordinator who should mentor and supervise care. Any care concerns (if valid) should at least initially be attempted to be resolved by these internal processes and procedures.

Wildlife carers volunteer to do what they do because they love animals. They go above and beyond in their care and compassion, waking all hours of the night to rescue and feed, attending to horrendously injured animals and facilitating humane euthanasia, all at great personal and financial cost. Many do it years on end with very little recognition and (for those with WIRES) often very little respect from the organisation they belong to.

I understand that RSPCA no doubt need to respond to any reports that they receive of mistreatment of animals. However the number of times they are evidently being summoned by WIRES to do their bidding seems completely inappropriate and a waste of their time and resources. It has lost them the respect they once may have held from those in the wildlife sector and broader community who are aware of what has been occurring.

Wildlife carers are in no way the same as those society fully supports RSPCA investigating: those who torture animals, puppy farms with inappropriate practices, those who shoot animals with guns or bows and arrows and leave them injured and suffering for days... the list of those instances must be long and unquestionable.

There is no comparison to a wildlife carer doing what they can to save an animal and nurse it back to health. Sure there are times when maybe they try a little too hard and perhaps need to let go of an animal with poor prognosis, but they do this from compassion and should be supported with understanding, counselling and gentle education - not a vengeful legal battle.

Using the RSPCA as a tool of WIRES management is not only inappropriate, unethical, and wasting RSPCA time and resources but it is highly damaging to the wildlife caring sector. Many wildlife carers are now very worried about who might “have it in for them” and whether that might lead to them being reported. The threat of being dragged through the courts, as happened to Tracey Dodds, is a deciding factor for some to leave wildlife caring - a personal cost too great for many. There are few enough dedicated wildlife carers as it is and society needs these front line responders.

The RSPCA has lost my respect and support, and that of many others who have watched these interventions unfold. I for one would never recommend family or friends donate to them until I was confident the cronyism had been eliminated.

I also would like to call for an enquiry into WIRES itself as I believe there is not only a mismanagement of funds but, more centrally, a failing organisational culture which is focused more on brand promotion than supporting volunteer members and (most importantly) the wildlife that it is there to support.

The problems in WIRES are overwhelming and well documented. Those who have been willing to raise issues, express concern, suggest solutions or speak out are cast as “trouble makers” and are publicly gaslit. We personally left WIRES after 10+ years of caring as our attempts at a local level to improve rescue outcomes for animals were thwarted by Head Office and we were treated with complete disrespect. Many others we know have left or are just holding on for the sake of the animals and are unwilling to speak up about concerns, issues and suggestions lest they be the next targeted by RSPCA. A parliamentary inquiry is truly warranted to help expose the issues in the wildlife sector.