

## **Charitable Organisations Name and Contact details**

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### **Main purpose of this charitable organisation.**

The mission of RSPCA Australia is to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection. Every year, around Australia, the RSPCA receives about 135,000 animals into its shelters and follows up close to 48,000 cruelty complaints. This vital work is carried out in each State and Territory by the member Societies of RSPCA Australia: RSPCA ACT, RSPCA Darwin Regional Branch, RSPCA NSW, RSPCA Queensland, RSPCA Tasmania, RSPCA Victoria, and RSPCA Western Australia. These member Societies also carry out a range of other important work to improve animal welfare at the State and Territory level, including running education programmes, improving standards for animal welfare in legislation, regulations, and codes of practice, and working with the community to increase awareness of welfare problems. The National Office complements this work by providing a sound administrative base for RSPCA Australia activities, as well as a central focus and network for communication between the State and Territory RSPCAs.

An important aspect of improving animal welfare is increasing public awareness of major issues. RSPCA Australia supports and coordinates national public awareness campaigns by providing up-to-date research, coordinating the commissioning of print, television and electronic advertising and by drafting and releasing press statements. Our recent campaigns have covered a range of issues including duck shooting, car restraints for dogs, cosmetic tail docking and fireworks. Many campaigns continue after the initial public awareness campaign is over. RSPCA Australia provides on-going monitoring and support for some campaigns in the form of continuing research.

The National Office is responsible for answering queries from members of the public on general animal welfare issues. Most of these queries arise from visitors to the RSPCA Australia website. Questions range from appeals for advice on buying or caring for pets and general enquiries from students studying animal-welfare issues at school, to detailed queries arising from RSPCA press releases or policy statements, and enquiries from primary producers or animal handlers seeking to ensure the welfare of their animals. We do our best to provide detailed responses to all of these questions, and file the resulting research materials and answers for future reference. Recent enquiries have focussed on subjects as diverse as the keeping of Vietnamese potbellied pigs as companion animals, the impact of specific vegetables on rabbit health, and welfare standards for security dogs.

Every year RSPCA Australia organises a seminar presenting the science behind an animal welfare issue. Recent subjects have included “Animal Welfare in the New Millennium: towards a national approach”, “Pets or Pests: the future of companion animal ownership”, “Equine

Welfare: balancing science and tradition” and “Solutions for achieving humane vertebrate pest control”. The Seminars are attended by 100-140 people and are promoted through the RSPCA Australia website. For the first time in 2003 the proceedings of the Seminar were published electronically and can be downloaded from the Seminars page of the website.

Each year RSPCA Australia organises a conference and workshop for the Chief Inspectors from each of the member Societies. This conference provides a valuable opportunity for the Chief Inspectors to liaise with one another, to compare experiences and to learn new skills. A similar conference for Shelter Managers is held annually and in October 2003 a meeting of public relations officers is planned.

RSPCA Australia maintains a library of over 1000 books and scientific papers all of which are available for lending to member Societies. We constantly update this collection as new books and papers become available. This knowledge base allows us to remain up-to-date on a broad range of animal welfare issues, and to reply quickly to any queries that we receive.

Every quarter RSPCA Australia sends out an Animal Welfare Science Update to each of the member Societies. This Update includes summaries in plain English of recent scientific publications that are relevant to animal welfare. The original articles are also filed in the RSPCA Australia library for future reference. These Updates have proved extremely popular and have a wide distribution, and have led to enquiries from members of Local Government and from ABC radio relating to papers that we summarised.

The Alan White Scholarship is awarded annually to a tertiary student working on a topic directly relevant to animal welfare. Through this scholarship, RSPCA Australia helps to foster an interest and commitment to this broad area of research, while individual projects result in increased knowledge of and improvements to specific animal welfare issues. The 2002 recipient of the Alan White Scholarship worked to reduce the risk of injury to fur-seals resulting from entrapment in marine debris through direct action and a public education campaign. Previous recipients have worked on topics including; the recognition of individual birds from voice recordings, the non-invasive genetic sampling of wombats, and environmental enrichment in zoos.

The Scientific Officer and Assistant Scientific Officer are involved in promoting animal welfare issues to a range of audiences through talks and presentations on specific topics. These include educating school students on basic animal welfare issues through to talks at national scientific conferences. Subjects covered have included ‘Animal welfare and the role of Animal Ethics Committees in genetic technology’, ‘Guidance for Animal Ethics Committees in assessing new technologies’, ‘The RSPCA egg accreditation program’, and ‘Animal welfare and pig housing and husbandry’.

In order to improve the welfare of animals in agriculture RSPCA Australia actively promotes the development of alternative production systems. One aspect of this is the development of RSPCA certification standards and the running of associated accreditation schemes.

The administration of the accreditation scheme involves the drafting of standards and the revision of these standards through ongoing research as experience, coordination of the national inspection scheme, keeping of records of inspections and licensing agreements, enforcement of the standards and collection of royalties. A large number of farms in every state are now involved in the egg certification scheme. The standards for the production of pork are still in development but a successful trial of these standards is running in Victoria and it is expected the scheme will expand to other locations in the future.

Equally important is the work done by the National Office on issues of national significance, especially where influence on Government at the Federal level can help to improve animal welfare across Australia. The National Office carries out this work by liaising with industry and government to improve the conditions under which animals are kept, transported and killed, by providing scientifically sound research and advice to member Societies and the general public, and by co-ordinating national public-education campaigns. RSPCA Australia is represented on several federal committees including the National Consultative Committee for Animal Welfare, which provides a means of directly influencing animal welfare policies at the national level.

One of the main reasons that the RSPCA is taken seriously by government, industry and the wider community is that we are seen to provide unbiased, high quality advice on animal welfare issues. The National Office is able to provide thorough background research to support national campaigns and to prepare detailed submissions on animal welfare issues as the need arises.

### **Principle reason for making this submission**

RSPCA Australia is concerned that it could be disqualified as a charity under Part 2 Section 8 (2) (c) of the proposed Charities Bill 2003. This is because RSPCA Australia engages in petitioning government to alter or change laws, so that the welfare of animals is accounted for in government legislation and policy. Attempting to influence government plays a minor part in our operations, as our key purpose is to provide education and research that will prevent and relieve the suffering of animals.

### **Income Tax Exempt Charity (ITEC) endorsement.**

RSPCA Australia is endorsed with the Australian Tax Office as an ITEC.

### **The effect of the Charities Bill 2003 on ITEC endorsement.**

RSPCA Australia would lose this endorsement if it was disqualified as a charity under Part 2 Section 8 (2) (c) of the proposed Charities Bill 2003.

### **Imposition of additional administrative burden.**

RSPCA Australia would not envisage that there would be any additional administrative burden on the organisation with the introduction of the Charities Bill 2003.

### **Does the Charities Bill 2003 provide the flexibility to ensure the definition can adapt to the changing needs of society?**

The Charities Bill 2003 would appear to provide flexibility to Charitable Organisations to meet the changing needs of society.

### **If the public benefit test were further strengthened by requiring the dominant purpose of a charity to also be *altruistic* would this affect your organisation?**

RSPCA Australia would not be affected if the extension of the public benefit test to require a charity to be altruistic was introduced.