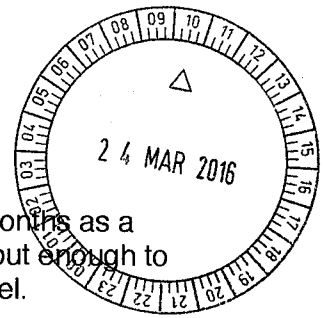


Select Committee into the Operations of The RSPCA WA (inc)



I have been attending the Legislative Inquiry into the RSPCA over the past few months as a concerned member of the public. I have not been able to get to all the sessions, but enough to observe the tenor of the questioning and the agenda of the three men on the panel.

I am not a member of any "animal liberation" group, simply someone (who like most people I know) has an interest and concern for animal welfare issues in WA.

Firstly, I think the public are entitled to know why this inquiry was even put together in the first place . The agenda of the Shooters and Fishers Party and the Live Export Lobby is so transparent it would be laughable if it were not costing public time and money.

The Shooters and Fishers want to introduce "recreational shooting " in National parks and forests. This has been strongly opposed by the public and the Minister has quite rightly not allowed this to proceed.

It is clear that The Live Export industry and associated livestock Industries want to downgrade the role of the RSPCA in animal welfare and prosecutions. As one producer put it " confine themselves to cats and dogs" as though the welfare of animals in livestock industries were of no importance.

It seems that they are attempting to portray the RSPCA is being some sort of radical activist group, completely ignoring the fact that the RSPCA are operating entirely within their charter under what are often difficult and confrontational circumstances.

Some comments regarding the last session I attended on Monday 23 November.

The RSPCA representatives answered all the questions put to them by the often hostile Hon Nigel Hallett and Paul Brown who made no attempt to hide the fact that they are representing the Live Export Lobby . Although the Hon Paul Brown denied this ,his parliamentary profile states "In this parliamentary role, Paul will continue to support the live export trade and agricultural industries while also maintaining a sharp focus on better health and educational outcomes for people living in regional WA." end of quote

- 1 I am concerned that these Hon gentlemen seem to have no concept of charity funding, and kept coming back again and again to declining membership numbers. Some basic research would have made clear that membership is not a major source of funding for charities, it is the support they get from the public in the form of donations which is important. I donate to several charities - Salvation Army, Save the Children, Assistance Dogs Australia among others, but am not a "member" of any of these organisations
- 2 The Hon Nigel Hallett does not seem to be able to distinguish the difference between humane euthanasia and "recreational shooting". This is of concern
- 3 But my main cause for concern, and it is a serious one, is the demand by the Hon Nigel Hallett that the RSPCA provide details of what he described as "Vexatious" complaints by the public. He gave the example of continued complaints of animals being transported with "a leg sticking out".

Who is to decide if a complaint is "vexatious". I would have thought that if there were numerous calls from the public regarding the transport of animals in 40 degree heat that means there is a problem that needs to be fixed, not dismissed as "vexatious"

He did backtrack by saying he did not need the names and addresses, but one has to ask, why does he want this information in the first place and what will it be used for?

- 4 The final witness, Mr Craig Forsythe, was there to give evidence regarding the meeting between Dr Carrick and the RSPCA inspector, which he described as "robust," doublespeak for rude and confrontational. But it soon became clear that he was there to promote the live export trade.

It may well be the case, as he said, that the transport of animals overseas has greatly improved and that fewer livestock die en route, but what has been ignored throughout these proceedings is the fate of these animals when they arrive in countries with no animal welfare legislation and no humane slaughtering facilities.

Horrendous examples of animals being slaughtered in the street are well documented and cannot be ignored.

Until this trade can guarantee the humane treatment of livestock in the country of destination questions will be continued to be raised by the public. I am realistic enough to know that this is an important trade for the pastoral industry and fills the need to provide high quality protein food to developing countries. However, there is a world wide push for greater responsibility in animal welfare which, if ignored, will jeopardise this industry.

Attacking the RSPCA for doing their job does no credit to this committee

Alexander Alford

21. March 2016