

**SELECT COMMITTEE INTO THE OPERATIONS OF THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS WESTERN AUSTRALIA (INC)**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
MONDAY, 17 AUGUST 2015**

**SESSION THREE**

**Members**

**Hon Rick Mazza (Chair)  
Hon Paul Brown (Deputy Chair)  
Hon Nigel Hallett  
Hon Lynn MacLaren  
Hon Sally Talbot**

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**Hearing commenced at 3.46 pm****Mr ANTHONY YORK****Senior Vice President, Western Australian Farmers Federation, sworn and examined:****Miss KIM HAYWOOD****Executive Officer, Policy, Western Australian Farmers Federation, sworn and examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Before we commence, I will introduce you to the members of the committee; I have been a bit remiss the last couple of times. We have Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Sally Talbot; our advisory officer, Niamh Corbett; I am Hon Rick Mazza, the Chair; and Hon Paul Brown, the Deputy Chair. On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome you to the meeting today. Before we begin I must ask that you take either the oath or the affirmation.

[Witnesses took the oath.]

**The CHAIR:** You will have signed a document entitled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood that document?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of this hearing for the record, and please be aware of the microphones and try to talk into them, ensure that you do not cover them with papers or make noise near them. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today’s proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as a transcript of your public evidence is finalised it should not be made public. I advise you that publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript of evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege. Would you like to make any opening statements to the committee?

**Mr York:** Only briefly, thanks Chairman. On the basis that you have read our report, I think the Farmers Federation and farmers generally historically have had a good respect of the RSPCA and how they operate and it is a relationship that we want to cultivate and have as a continuing, meaningful one. Certainly from our membership though there has been a perception in recent years that the way they have chosen to operate, particularly in the commercial animal food industry, as the sector that our membership represent, has led to many of our members feeling a little uncomfortable about the role that the RSPCA has been playing and we want to be able to improve that, if possible.

[3.50 pm]

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Tony, what interaction does your organisation have with the RSPCA? Or what interaction does your membership have with the RSPCA?

**Mr York:** I know there are many farmers who are members of the Farmers Federation and are also members of the RSPCA. I do not know how many, but I know it would be not inconsiderable. Many farmers are on the board of the RSPCA. I, for one, am a life member of the RSPCA and I know there are other members that are actively involved, in terms of the membership of the

RSPCA. In terms of the operation or the organisation, we do have fairly regular meetings with the RSPCA, although it has been fractured, you might say, in recent years. I do not know whether you want to add any more to that, Kim?

**Miss Haywood:** I think we see a role for the RSPCA under the terms of the Animal Welfare Act, but just over the past 12 months or so that has been a bit fractured, as Tony said. There is increasing distrust of where the RSPCA is heading. They seem to have taken a very different direction to what they used to have and we are very keen to regain and reposition that back so that we—both parties, DAFWA officials, and the RSPCA general inspectors—can work together for the benefit of the animals we are talking about.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Tony, how do you reconcile your role as a farmer and here with this submission against the role that the RSPCA have—I use “against” but I am not saying that you are waving the flag against them or anything like that. How do you reconcile your life membership of the RSPCA with their ongoing role against farming, against live export, and as per your submission?

**Mr York:** Well, there are two things. My life membership is an historical thing and because I took it up many, many years ago I do not intend to retract that but I take an interest in the activities of the RSPCA. I am still in the animal industry in my own business and my business is animal welfare too, to a second or third degree, or whatever because I am dealing with sheep in my case. I see the RSPCA as an organisation that should be a farmer’s ally. I do not have any queries to do with its activities in terms of companion animals, so that is another issue and I do not really want to talk about that. It is about their engagement in the animal industry that we are in. I have seen them as an ally and a colleague that reflect many of the beliefs that a good farmer would adhere to, in terms of their general animal husbandry management practice. To me as a producer I do not in any way endorse any form of cruelty to animals, so any activity the RSPCA is involved in. Checking that, or qualifying that, I do not have any problem in supporting that activity. I do want to say that in recent years, in terms of animal welfare administration, and as an act of Parliament, our agricultural department was heavily engaged in the administration of that act. I know, through changes in budget allocations and so on, that there are restrictions on the investment the department makes in different areas, and there is a perception that I hold, and I think many farmers hold, in that the department has outsourced some of its responsibilities, in terms of administering the Animal Welfare Act, and that it has been opportune to take advantage of the services that the RSPCA provide. Our query is that perhaps there has not been sufficient oversight in how the RSPCA have assumed that role, under their authority that they are granted through the Animal Welfare Act, so it is really about how they have been implementing their recent function. I mean, they really have not been involved in this area for more than about five years, in an active sense, I would say.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Given that DAFWA has the livestock compliance unit, which is under the DG of agriculture and is basically solely responsible for livestock and production animals and has nothing to do with dogs and cats and companion animals, would you see that perhaps the DAFWA livestock compliance unit is better positioned with experience and governance and oversight of livestock and commercial animals, and that perhaps the RSPCA should be limited with its funding to looking after that very same dogs and cats and companion animals?

**Mr York:** Look, I would agree with you. I think that comes to the gist of a lot of our submission. With your permission, Kim can perhaps elaborate on our understanding of what the MOU should have been with the department, RSPCA, and how it is actually being applied. Kim?

**Miss Haywood:** Under the current terms of the MOU, in principle, the partnership arrangement should work quite well, and in the past it has worked quite well. However, as we have mentioned, like over the past 12 months, there seems to be a refocussing of RSPCA roles and policies and obligations, which tend to conflict with the concept of animal cruelty, as opposed to enhanced farm

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animal welfare, and also the move more towards, say, sectorial groups, activist-type agendas to raise income. Live export is an extremely important and valuable market to our livestock industry. We understand that the national RSPCA policy is to see a ban on live exports, instead of reinforcing the good welfare practices that we are trying to put in place across the globe, which has never been done by another country before. Although RSPCA WA says that they are not engaged in that policy, or they do not support that policy, if you click on the RSPCA WA website, the first thing that comes up is a big strapline supporting the ban of live exports. Also recently on the back of Transperth buses there was a big campaign against the dairy industry using Hereford cow and calves, which we certainly did not approve of. So, there seems to be a lot of disquiet and a lot of mistrust between where the RSPCA is going, and its role under the MOU within the grant that supports the Animal Welfare Act. We really need to see a realignment of the obligations of both the department and the RSPCA in terms of meeting the compliance and enforcement of the act in accordance with the act.

**The CHAIR:** In your submission on page 3, you make reference that the farming community views the RSPCA as anti-farming. In fact, I think the *Farm Weekly* picked up on that as well. Why do you view the RSPCA as being anti-farming?

[4.00 pm]

**Mr York:** All right, I —

**The CHAIR:** Because they have denied that. The RSPCA came out in the defence over the fact that they are not anti-farming.

**Mr York:** As far as I am concerned, we are talking about perceptions and it is what our membership is saying. They believe the RSPCA is now anti-farming. The first piece of evidence for that is that they are actively campaigning against the export of live animals. Live animals are a very important part of our agricultural sector, and, really, from a grazier's perspective, if an industry is advocating the banning of the live animal trade, they are anti-agriculture. It is as simple as that; that is how they are interpreting it. They see that as being provocative and unnecessary, and they certainly would have much preferred to have seen the RSPCA work in conjunction with that animal export industry, and in fact be our ambassadors, really, to show our customers and our client base how to better manage animals in the trade, effectively, rather than just reject it as being an industry that should be closed down.

**The CHAIR:** Besides live export, because I think that has been discussed at length, what other animal husbandry practices do the RSPCA oppose that do not fit in with what you would call —

**Mr York:** Well, we have had some comments made by some of our membership, when it comes to the MOU with the department in the administering of the Animal Welfare Act that instead of going through what many of us would have assumed was a procedure where you define minor, major or critical acts of animal cruelty, shall we say, that can be addressed through management and changed behaviour, there is a perception by many of our members that the RSPCA officers choose to go straight to prosecution and that it does not allow the process of the grower-producer improving their animal husbandry to avoid that end result.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Is that borne out by anything other than anecdote?

**Mr York:** Look, we have farmers—members—saying this is what has happened. But if you want us to produce some evidence, I can tell you it is very difficult but we probably can get somebody who is prepared to come forward and say, "This is what happened to me."

**The CHAIR:** I have just a couple more questions and then I will pass it over to other members.

At the beginning of the hearing you mentioned that the relationship with the RSPCA has been fractured in recent times. Have you had meetings with the RSPCA to try to overcome some of the hurdles and differences of opinion that you have to try to resolve issues?

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**Mr York:** I have not personally been party to it, but I know our president has and I know our meat section president representatives have.

**The CHAIR:** I can see Ms Haywood nodding her head, so maybe —have you been involved with that?

**Miss Haywood:** Yes, there have been two meetings and they have been very productive and objective meetings. We have discussed a lot of what Tony is talking about, particularly around the misunderstanding of the roles under the MOU and LCU officers as opposed to the RSPCA officers. So they have been productive, and I think no-one would disagree that the relationship, as it started off with the LCU inspectors and the general inspectors, is a good relationship, particularly with the RSPCA inspectors being really focused on companion animal-type animals, as 98 per cent of welfare issues surround cruelty around cats and dogs and so on. If we look beyond the farm gate to the feedlot and meat processing industry, generally that relationship works very well in the fact that the LCU operators are at feedlot and meet meat processors on a daily basis. When a significant animal welfare issue arises, they ring the RSPCA inspectors and they deal with the situation together. Sometimes we hear issues where the general RSPCA inspectors will arrive on a farm and take a more, say, aggressive approach. As Tony has mentioned, they will go straight to getting a prosecution without looking at the case on a general practice-general husbandry type issue. So there might have been a bunch of other factors that had occurred that resulted in a minor or major welfare issue that can be resolved, rather than going to the critical approach of initiating prosecution.

**The CHAIR:** Do you think more training for the inspectors may assist in making sure there are fairer outcomes for people?

**Miss Haywood:** Yes, absolutely. I understand that a lot of the 10 inspectors who are employed by the RSPCA have come from the UK system, and although they go for an in-depth training, the animal welfare that applies to a companion animal—a life-social animal—can be quite different to the welfare and husbandry practices that apply to farm animals going into the food chain. I think there is a huge opportunity here for greater education of the officers and how they can work in a more conducive relationship with the department officers for the good of the animals that we are all trying to look after.

**The CHAIR:** I have a couple of questions, but I will pass over to Hon Sally Talbot who is pretty keen to ask a question, too.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I would like to ask you the same question I have asked previous witnesses—I am not sure whether you were in the gallery for the previous hearings.

**Mr York:** No.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** So you do not know how they responded?

**Mr York:** No; I do not know the question either.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** You made a similar point to other witnesses that something has changed; I am really keen to tease out exactly what you mean. So let us take it in two tranches. First of all, as far as the RSPCA practices and policies go, what are you claiming has changed?

**Miss Haywood:** I mean, the key change that has resulted in a lot of distrust and a lot of removal of membership from rural communities and urban communities is this change of direction to more of an activist-based policy to generate income to support RSPCA going forward. That has been the critical issue for the farming community. It is this change of direction, change of policy that all obviously stems from things like the pictures on the back of buses and the issues around live export and that kind of thing.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Is the implication that you want us to get from what you are saying that there was a time during which the RSPCA approved of live exports, and now they do not?

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**Miss Haywood:** Well, nobody probably likes live exports for a whole bunch of reasons, but I think it is the approach they have taken out with the campaign saying, you know, “ban this, and here are the facts”, which are not the facts. So it is misrepresentation of the facts, and very little consultation. I think there has also been a shift with the number; for example, I have been told—I do not know whether it is true—that there are very few farmers on RSPCA boards now around the state or nationally, and there is not a vet on the RSPCA board; I am not totally sure whether that is correct. But there just seems to be a complete change of policy.

**Mr York:** Can I just add something? I think in a broader sense farmers are members of the public—we are no different. The RSPCA is, by royal assent, a servant and an arm of government, effectively. They have government imprimatur to act in terms of avoiding cruelty to animals. There is, I think, a feeling that they are a custodian of protecting the welfare of animals, and certainly in the past there was never a feeling that that gave them the right to change or actively oppose any kind of animal industry. It was about looking after the welfare of the animal as they were engaged in whatever that industry was; it was not about actively campaigning to remove a form of industry. So, I think in a principle sense there are many members who are farmers who are saying, “They don’t have the right to actively campaign against our industry. They have the right to actively act as custodians to make sure that we’re not acting in a cruel manner to those animals”, absolutely. But they do not have the right to tell us that we are not allowed to run an industry like the live export trade. It is the industry’s decision as to how we do that.

[4.10 pm]

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** What about the relationship between the WA Farmers Federation and the RSPCA? What has changed there in a concrete sense? Could you give us some examples of instances of changes? Remember, as the Chair told you at the beginning, you can give evidence in camera if you choose to do so.

**Mr York:** I just think we have become part of the political public debate.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** “We” being?

**Mr York:** “We” being the Farmers Federation and the RSPCA. We are being seen as on opposite sides of a debate. We are being forced into it by the way the public operate and the way the media operate.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Can I just clarify that? You are talking about a change in public perception rather than the change in RSPCA policy.

**Mr York:** We are arguing there has been a change of their policy, how they act and how they behave. I have just said that. If we object to that, we get forced into being on the other side of the argument. We still have discussions with the RSPCA and we still want to have discussions but we seem to agree to differ.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Has there been some change in relation to the transferring of the Animal Welfare Act from local government to DAFWA?

**Mr York:** Yes. I think there has been a perception by the agricultural sector, as represented by our members, that there has been a withdrawal of investment from the public sector and from the government. The funds have been diminishing over many years. There is a perception that this latest relationship, having the RSPCA involved in administering the Animal Welfare Act, is another example of government outsourcing its obligations according to acts of Parliament.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** That is what you meant earlier in the hearing when you said that the RSPCA is outsourcing.

**Mr York:** The department of agriculture and the administration of the Animal Welfare Act is being outsourced.

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**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** So DAFWA is not doing its job.

**Mr York:** Absolutely, and I hope that is in our submission. It is a two-sided thing. You might say that the behaviour of the RSPCA where we have grievances has been allowed to occur because there has been a vacuum of oversight in terms of the administration of the Animal Welfare Act.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Are your comments about DAFWA specifically in relation to the LCU?

**Mr York:** My understanding is that our membership is relatively happy with the way the LCU operates. Is that right?

**Miss Haywood:** Basically from our consultation with our members in relation to this, in principle, the LCU operators and inspectors work very well with the industry behind the farm gate and beyond it but they do feel that DAFWA has a responsibility and an obligation under the MOU to make this partnership arrangement work. As Tony has said, because DAFWA have probably been focused on other things, they have not been administering the act in accordance with the MOU, which has allowed things to change.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** The MOU between DAFWA and the RSPCA?

**Miss Haywood:** Correct. Under the grant. Coupled with that is this awareness of change of direction. The act clearly lays out the roles and responsibilities of the LCU and the RSPCA inspectors, and that is a good concept and that works really well. However, over the last 12 to 24 months because DAFWA has not been taking the oversight of that, the RSPCA have then refocused. Maybe they are inspectors into their overall national policy objectives and that is what has really created the confusion in rural areas and in urban areas who are questioning what is happening and where the RSPCA are heading.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** You have 4 200 farmers in your group and you have listed the range of activities that they are involved in. How many of those are live exporters?

**Mr York:** My estimate would be that almost anybody who is involved in live sheep or cattle do have some live export, so of that 4 400, maybe 2 200 of them are in beef or cattle as well as other parts of the industry sector. Almost all of them have a component of their business model that is related to live export.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** So grain growers would also be live exporters and meat, as well as wool producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers, commercial egg producers and beekeepers?

**Mr York:** Some of them are multifaceted. Some beef growers grow crop. They are both. Half of them are involved in the live trade but about only a quarter of those you would say a very significant portion of their income is involved with live trade.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** It used to be that we had codes of practice. I know because I have attended some of your annual get-togethers where you educate your farmers about codes of practice. Now we have shifted to this new Animal Welfare Act with regulations. I was wondering what the role of WAFF is. WAFF used to play a big role in educating farmers about the codes of practice in the various farming activities in WA. What role do you play in educating farmers about animal welfare?

**Mr York:** In terms of actively having an education program, we do not have one. Sorry, we do some workshops.

**Miss Haywood:** We were heavily involved in, as you said, a code of practice or standards and guidelines for sheep and cattle. We promote those to the membership via fact sheets and newsletters. We use a lot of social media and sound bites. We also do a number of workshops and we have a very good structure around councils. For example, last Tuesday we had a big sheep and wool meeting which looked at animal welfare practices, how we enhance them, both for the domestic market and for the export market.

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**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** I am interested in live export animal welfare education. What do you do for that?

**Miss Haywood:** It is mainly workshops about practical husbandry measures that will enhance animal welfare for farmed animals and for the working dogs, which is a critical component of the sheep industry. Obviously, we put a lot of information out about the ESCAS scheme, which is very important. That underpins the live export trade, so we are very active. We keep that information and the protocols. We keep trying to enhance animal husbandry codes of practice in line with new research that comes out. We also activate through our councils areas of new research that we need to look at, which will again enhance animal welfare protocols.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Worldwide it has been acknowledged that there are animal cruelty concerns associated with animal live exports. The RSPCA—I read it in WA—is highlighting those worldwide concerns. I was wondering if WAFF felt that there were any concerns for you as industry representatives of the farmers in the practice of live exports.

**Mr York:** Within the context of our membership and what we do in Australia, I think we have an impeccable record in terms of animal husbandry in a general sense for commercial animals. I do not think we have anything to be uncomfortable about whatsoever. The real issue is what happens with our livestock once it goes to other markets and how it is being handled by other cultures and other societies. The Farmers Federation has been very reluctant but very supportive of the initiatives that have been put in place recently with regard to ESCAS, for example, which is most definitively having an improvement in terms of animal welfare in those customer environments. We as members and farmers certainly support that, and we certainly argue that we are a positive influence while that trade continues and that, if we were not involved in that trade, it would do nothing to improve the welfare of those animals. I am talking about animals in other constituencies and other countries.

[4.20 pm]

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** My final question is more regarding a couple of concerns that you have raised. One is the aggressive attitude toward prosecution, and the other is the more promotional aspects of anti-live exports campaigning. Can you further explain why your concerns are about the prosecutions, because, if a law has been broken, is it not appropriate to prosecute? Can you explain why you are having a conflict, I guess, with the way the RSPCA is approaching it?

**Miss Haywood:** There are two issues here. The department's policy is shaped around infringement letters and minor, major and critical animal welfare breaches. In the department, as I said before, there are some issues that occur. For example, if an animal has been tagged incorrectly, and that might just be an oversight for a bunch of reasons, but to go straight to a prosecution case because an animal has got a tag in the wrong ear, that should all be about infringement notices that this is incorrect. It is about education, that we need to have one tag in each ear.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Can I just interrupt you? I asked you earlier whether you could document those cases, and you said they were anecdotal.

**Miss Haywood:** The evidence?

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Yes, the tagging in the wrong ear leading straight to a prosecution.

**Miss Haywood:** Yes, from what we have been told, a large percentage of animal welfare cases are around, you know, mistagging, for example.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** That go to prosecution?

**Miss Haywood:** No, what that was saying is that those sorts of issues should be dealt with in infringement and education campaign with the owner.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Have they been dealt with as a prosecution? Is that what you are saying?

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**Miss Haywood:** Yes, that is what I am saying, that the RSPCA inspectors have come in and they prefer to go straight to prosecution for a minor issue that should be around education and making sure that that situation does not come again. No one would disagree that, if there is a major cruelty issue, on a farm or for a cat and dog, that needs to go to full prosecution. So critical —

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, we have just a couple of minutes left, and I want to give Hon Paul Brown a go.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** I will finish with this. Just a clarification, because this is really important stuff. We know that there are a certain number of prosecutions, and we know what they are, so, I guess we need to hear from you if you feel those prosecutions have been in error, because our evidence is that those prosecutions have been completely successful and, under scrutiny, they are completely justified, I guess. I guess what we need is to hear the evidence opposite to that, if you disagree.

**Mr York:** I do not have the numbers about whether prosecutions have increased or not; I cannot say. Perhaps you can tell me.

**Miss Haywood:** It is the companions. Out of the 40 prosecutions that come forward this year, they have been around cruelty to cats and dogs.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** So there are no prosecutions for livestock that you are concerned about?

**Miss Haywood:** Not that I am aware of.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Prosecutions regarding cruelty to livestock?

**Miss Haywood:** Well, there will be but we do not know about them.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Prosecutions relating to the wrong tagging?

**Miss Haywood:** Well, that is what we have been told by our members—that prosecutions have been initiated just for a minor offence that should have been by an infringement letter.

**Mr York:** Sorry, there is not much time. Just quickly, of course this debate, I think, from the RSPCA perspective, is about public opinion and influencing public opinion. They have got a campaign that wants to change an industry and have live trade closed down, effectively. That is on their website. If they can project a public image that farmers are being prosecuted for whatever reason, they can influence public opinion and we believe that is what is going on. There is an intent to influence public opinion by highlighting cruelty to animals in a general sense to the livestock industry. It is about influencing public opinion.

**The CHAIR:** I have got one or two questions for you, and then I will hand over to Hon Paul Brown. Just moving away from live export and other issues, I see that in your submission you spoke about the RSPCA being anti-farming, and there is a move now for RSPCA-approved food, like chicken, beef, milk et cetera. What is WAFarmers' position on that?

**Mr York:** A mixed opinion, because I have to say the RSPCA can be a great positive influence as well as a negative influence, and it is every farmer's right to engage in a marketing edge, and if they perceive that being RSPCA endorsed might give them a commercial advantage, I do not see any reason why we are in a position to object to that.

**Miss Haywood:** It is a commercial decision.

**Mr York:** It is a commercial decision. We have not taken a position as an organisation either for or against that sort of activity, because we are very aware that it is an issue that many of our producers see as a commercial advantage.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** This is not the question I was going to ask, but I will ask that in a second. Given what you have just talked about in regards to commercial producers partnering up with the RSPCA for a stamped product, is there any beef or cattle producer that you know of partnering up with the RSPCA?

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**Mr York:** I do not know; I only know about poultry.

**Miss Haywood:** The current schemes are around free range eggs et cetera. The RSPCA did look at creating an RSP milk brand, but that was rejected by the industry, because we have a WAFarmers milk brand, and there has not been any discussion yet about RSPCA-approved beef brand or lamb brand, for example.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Do you think the RSPCA would be conflicted if they were actually to partner with a sheep or cattle producer, given that there are not too many sheep or cattle producers that I know that do not participate either directly or indirectly in the live export industry? Given that the RSPCA are vehemently opposed to live exports —

**Mr York:** I would have thought there is enough evidence to show that surely they are already conflicted.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Now I will go to the question that I was going to ask. I think I am very much on record as having come from the live export industry. Given that there has been very much an increase in better animal welfare outcomes for live export, particularly in the quality of vessels, the reduction in mortality rates—in fact, nowadays when we are looking at marketplaces and markets that we ship cattle to, we are seeing nil mortalities on them and that is a direct commercial advantage for us, and the implementation of ESCAS, which is obviously having even further beneficial animal welfare outcomes in our marketplaces—how do you see the RSPCA's continued opposition of the live export industry, when the live export industry, therefore your members as part of that either directly or indirectly, are actually having an increase in better animal welfare standards, but that is from the industry not being seen to be recognised?

[4.30 pm]

**Mr York:** All I can say is I am particularly disappointed that that is the case and I would have thought that the RSPCA would have been far more productive if they had been supporting the initiatives and of the influence that our live trade and ESCAS has had in a global sense in terms of animal welfare outcomes.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any other last questions before we close the hearing? I will move to close the hearing now. On behalf of the committee, I wish to thank you for your appearance today. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you in writing in the next few days, together with the transcript of evidence, which includes any questions you may have to take on notice. Responses to any questions will be requested by a due date and should you be unable to meet this deadline, please contact the committee staff as soon as possible. Once again, thanks for your attendance today.

**Hearing concluded at 4.30 pm**

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