

RSPCA Animal Welfare Philosophy & Policies



For all creatures great and small.

Origin

- The modern animal welfare movement arose from the great social reform movement in the United Kingdom which began in the late 18th Century.
- A key factor precipitating the reform was industrialisation, the consequent shift of human populations to major cities and the social problems this caused.
- The link between cruelty to children and animals was emphasised.
- There was also the philosophical idea that the world did not have to be a cruel and uncaring place, that it could become part of a more loving universe.



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These reforms saw amongst other things:

- **William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery**
- **Lord Shaftsbury and the prevention of cruelty to children**
- **Wilberforce, and Richard Martin and the prevention of cruelty to animals**
- **Arthur Broome and Martin and the foundation of the RSPCA movement**
- **Elizabeth Fry and prison reform**
- **Florence Nightingale and the revolution in nursing**
- **Robert Peel and his police force**
- **Lord Cadbury and his model village demonstrating that workers need not live and die in unsanitary slums**
- **General Booth and the Salvation Army, and**
- **Baron Pierre De Coubertin whose modern Olympics was really about ending war by promoting international understanding.**



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- The driver that led to the passage of the Bill to prevent cruel and improper treatment of cattle in 1822 was the cruelty meted out to horses and draught animals
- The driver which led to the formation of the RSPCA in 1824 was the inability of the police to enforce the law.
- Cruelty to horses was the factor that led to the foundation of RSPCA Victoria in 1871.



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RSPCA Philosophy

- Wilberforce firmly believed in the natural order. He agreed with the edict of the Book of Genesis that “man had dominion over creation” but insisted that any use of animals be justified and humane.
- Despite consistent and clear dictionary definitions of “justified” and “humane” this Wilberforce dictum has remained the sticking point between animal users and animal welfarists.
- The politician Richard Martin insisted that the new RSPCA should not become known as a prosecuting society, but its prime aim should be to “alter the moral feelings of the country”



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- The Objectives of the new RSPCA, founded in 1824, were to:
 - **Enforce the anti-cruelty legislation**
 - **Seek amendment to the legislation**
 - **Create and sustain an intelligent public opinion regarding cruelty to animals.**
- To which other Objectives, such as the establishment of animal shelters and veterinary clinics have been added in more recent times.
- The Objectives of the RSPCA in Australia differ little from the RSPCA UK.
- The RSPCA believes that the *Five Freedoms of Animals* is a useful guide to judging whether the use of an animal is justified and humane



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RSPCA in Australia

- The RSPCA are independent State and Territory run organisations. All anti- cruelty legislation is a State legal jurisdiction. The RSPCA in each state and territory maintains one of the inspectorates that enforces this legislation.
- RSPCA Australia is a Federation of all State RSPCAs. It principally operates to direct and develop national policy and represent the Societies interests at a Federal level.
- Internationally, RSPCA Australia is represented on the Board of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).



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RSPCA Victoria Modus Operandi

- The RSPCA is a community-based NGO incorporated as a Company limited by guarantee.
- A major driver for all RSPCA activity is community opinion. There is a complex and efficient system of ascertaining such opinion.
- RSPCA strategy and general Society policy is developed and adopted by a Board of honorary Directors.
- RSPCA Animal Welfare policy is developed and adopted (unanimously) by the RSPCA National Council and published annually.



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- A series of Board committees composed of Board and staff members and guests develops all strategy and policy recommendations.
- Management of the RSPCA is by paid qualified staff headed by a CEO
- The RSPCA Inspectorate is managed independently of the Board. The inspectorate is trained and operates under the POCTA Act and MOUs with the DPI and Victoria police.
- The Inspectorate activity is overseen by the State Ombudsman and FOI applies.



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- All political effort and advocacy of the RSPCA is aimed at attaining RSPCA policy, but with no time limits imposed continual incremental improvement is accepted.
- As part of our commitment to gain incremental improvements in animal welfare RSPCA participates in numerous committees that review legislation and Codes of Practice.
- The RSPCA continually lobbies government and the public service on current issues.
- The RSPCA accepts numerous invitations to join committees or address groups regardless of RSPCA policy on the issues to be debated.



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- The RSPCA conducts seminars or awareness campaigns on issues as required.
- The RSPCA education service is not limited to school children, but engages all ages including community and special interest groups.
- A major animal shelter is run from RSPCA HQ and at 10 other regional sites in Victoria.



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RSPCA Priorities

- The strap-line of the RSPCA logo declares the Society to be *For All Creatures Great and Small*. Work priorities must be set to honour such a commitment
- Priority setting is designed to ensure satisfactory outcomes in attaining RSPCA Objectives, particularly law enforcement, law amendment, and community education to ensure the humane management of all species.
- Victoria has largely led the way in creating a well trained and competent anti-cruelty Inspectorate. MOUs with the DPI and Victoria police have greatly assisted. Other States and Territories are well behind in this regard.



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- The development of anti-cruelty law has been very slow. Part 3 of the Police Offences Act defined animal cruelty as “the infliction of pain or suffering on an animal which because of its type or its degree is unacceptable”
- A stand-alone “Protection of Animals Act” did not appear until 1966 and was later amended in 1980 to make way for “statutory cruelties” and the introduction of Codes of Practice.
- The 1966 amended Act was consolidated in 1986 and rebadged the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and has been amended frequently since because of court decisions, need to further define inspectorate powers, or changed community attitudes.
- The welfare outcomes for individual animals are just as important to the RSPCA as those required for large groups of animals in large scale operations.



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Production Animal Priorities

- Issues regarding the humane management of intensively kept farm animals remains a high priority because little has been resolved since the Brambell Report and recommendations (1965).
- New concerns over the treatment of animals in the intensive industries is not being driven solely by animal welfare considerations, but community concerns regarding principally food safety.
- Humane management for extensively kept farm animals is a growing priority with quite variable responses to concerns from the industries.
- Humane long distance transport and slaughter issues are gaining momentum



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Particular Issues of Concern

- Husbandry procedures being undertaken without analgesia by non accredited practitioners (castration, teeth clipping, disbudding/dehoring, tail docking, mulesing, laprascopic AI).
- Confinment of animals in unsuitable barren environments (sow stalls & crates, battery cages, single penning of sheep).
- Transport of animals with poor welfare outcomes (bobby calves, live export for slaughter).
- Intensive industries: poor inspection regimes, stocking densities.



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National Welfare Standards

■ RSPCA is greatly concerned with the development of the proposed National Welfare Standards to replace unenforceable Codes of Practice. With respect to the proposed National Standards and Guidelines for Land Transport of Animals.

- **Timelines are unrealistic and there is a lack of due process.**
- **The mechanism for determining minimum standards is not soundly based.**
- **Level of welfare outcomes that will be achieved is doubted.**
- **It appears that there will be more unenforceable guidelines than enforceable standards.**
- **Legislation underpinning standards has not been sufficiently developed to support the enforcement of national standards.**
- **The commitment of the States and Territories to introduce similar legislation to enforce the standards is in doubt.**



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Other Animal Welfare Priorities

- Euthanasia of thousands of healthy socialised cats every year due to oversupply.
- Need for mandatory desexing of companion (pet) animals.
- Hunting of ducks and other animals for sport.
- Animals used for rodeo, jumps racing, travelling menageries and circus.
- The need to apply animal welfare principles to the management of wildlife and pest animals.



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RSPCA Accreditation Standards

- Providing consumers with choice in their purchases. Animal welfare is becoming a key aspect of choice.
- Based on the 'Five Freedoms' derived from UK Freedom Foods Standards, scientific data and practical farming techniques.
- Transparent, auditable systems monitored every 8 weeks by specialist auditors.
- Current accreditation is for the production of humane eggs and pork.
- Pigs and chickens are kept in systems that cater for their normal behavioral and physical needs.



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- Considerate handling, transport and humane slaughter are part of the standards.
- Barren intensive housing systems such as battery cages and sow stalls are unacceptable.
- Chickens and pigs are allowed sufficient space and the environment to perform most normal behaviors.
- The only Australian standards that endeavor to protect the welfare of each animal at each stage of the production system.
- Chicken meat and dairy production are obvious directions for future RSPCA standards.
- Royalties produced from RSPCA Accredited systems are used only to develop and support auditing and the development of new standards.



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