

# The Australian Veterinary Association Limited

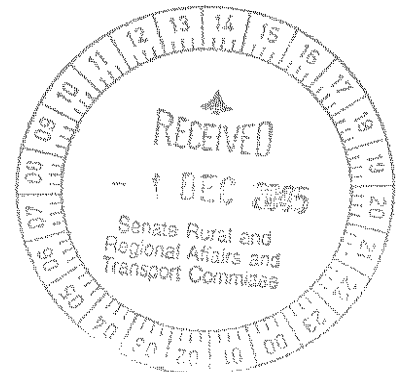
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30 November 2005

Ms Maureen Weeks  
The Committee Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Ms Weeks

## **National Animal Welfare Bill 2005**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the provisions of the *National Animal Welfare Bill 2005*.

The Australian Veterinary Association, as the National Body representing Australia's Veterinarians, has adopted the position that the professional role of veterinarians in society is "to prevent and relieve animal suffering" and second "to maintain and enhance the health, productivity and well-being of animals". In our view the close involvement of veterinarians is very important for the success of any plan or activity that aims to improve the welfare position of animals.

The intent of the Bill is to advance animal welfare in Australia and this in itself is commendable. However, it is our view that the model underpinning the Bill is impracticable and involves excessive regulation that is unduly harsh in some areas. In addition the Bill itself is redundant in that there are other strategies and processes currently in place or being implemented that will deliver better outcomes for the animals and animal industries of Australia.

In the context of the advancement of animal welfare the AVA strongly believes that:

- Australia is considered internationally as having an excellent record where animal welfare is concerned, even if there are some inter-jurisdictional challenges in the management of the processes.

- Engagement of all the potential stakeholders in the process of developing the regulatory framework for national animal welfare requirements is essential and this has not occurred in the development of the proposed Bill. An approach involving full and complete collaboration by all stakeholders is being used in the development and implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy and is already showing signs of achieving the positive welfare outcomes sought. The AVA is proud to have been involved in the development of the Strategy and is committed to the rapid and complete adoption of aspects of the Strategy.
- The concept within the Bill "to ensure animal welfare issues are given adequate priority at a national level" is already being adequately addressed with the implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.
- The promotion of "the care, protection and use of domestic animals, livestock, wildlife and animals kept for scientific purposes in a way that is humane, responsible and accountable, and to ensure that enforceable standards are in place to achieve this end" (Bartlett, Second reading speech, 2005) is extremely desirable and can be achieved with strong government support for the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.
- The need for a "reasonable balance between the welfare needs of animals and the interests of people who use animals for a livelihood; to reflect human community attitudes and expectations as to how animals should be treated, and to track advances in the scientific knowledge of animal biology, psychology and behaviour in respect to their needs and care" as identified by Senator Bartlett is essential and veterinarians are central to the development and functioning of any plans to achieve this. Again the way forward being developed under the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy should effectively deal with this issue.
- The considerable emphasis within the scope of the proposed Bill on animals used in research and teaching is important however the Australian Code of Practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, which is adopted in full in every State's legislation already effectively, manages this situation. Importantly, through the adoption of this Code, Australia is recognised internationally as leading the world in the regulation of animal research.
- The reference to a need for a better national recording system to identify the numbers of animals being used for research in Australia is already being addressed through activities involving the development of such a system under the existing regulatory framework. In fact, Members of the AVA who sit on Animal Ethics Committees, or who work in the research area are actively supporting moves to nationalise collection of data on animal usage.

In summary the AVA fully supports the concept of consistent animal welfare legislation throughout Australia and believes that this should occur through the development and implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy. Our hope would be that the process that is followed would bring about a positive engagement of the Australian community and enhance a stronger culture of animal welfare within the Australian ethos. The AVA therefore strongly endorses the adoption of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy as the primary vehicle for the advancement of animal welfare.

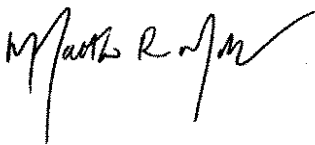
The AVA does not believe that the proposed *National Animal Welfare Bill 2005* will provide a workable mechanism to effectively deliver animal welfare regulation and associated welfare outcomes. Passage of the proposed Bill would cause an unnecessary and unwieldy overlap of State based animal welfare legislation that already includes many of the elements outlined in the proposed national Bill. The use of National Model Legislation developed in consultation with all stakeholders, including the AVA, and adopted by the States would be a more desirable approach to the development of complimentary animal welfare laws across Australia.

The Australian Veterinary Association therefore recommends that the proposed Bill is rejected and that the Government provide strong support for achieving the desired animal welfare outcomes through the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.

The AVA would welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Senate Committee about the Association's considerations about the advancement of a national approach to animal welfare.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Dr Matthew Makin  
**President**