

AUSTRALIAN COMPANION ANIMAL COUNCIL INC.

30 November 2005

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

Dear Sir / Madam

National Animal Welfare Bill 2005

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

The Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC) is the peak body representing the pet care industry in Australia. It is a non-profit organisation committed to the promotion of responsible pet ownership. We believe that all policy affecting companion animals should recognise the importance and value of pets in society.

The purpose of the Australian Companion Animal Council is to provide a forum for the pet care industry to promote the benefits of socially responsible companion ownership to the wider community of Australia.

Members of ACAC are:

- Australian Veterinary Association Ltd (AVA) - National association for Veterinarians
- Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association (ASAVA) - National special interest group for Veterinarians interested in small (generally companion) animals
- Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC) - National association of registered purebred dog breeders
- Avcare - National association for crop protection and animal health
- Delta Society Australia - Non-profit organisation committed to helping people through positive interaction with companion animals
- Pet Food Industry Association of Australia (PFIAA) - National association of pet food manufacturers
- Pet Industry Association of Australia (PIAA) - National association representing pet industry sectors including petshop owners, kennel owners and groomers

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- Australian Veterinary Association
- Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association
- Australian National Kennel Council
- Avcare
- Delta Society Australia
- Pet Food Industry Association of Australia
- Pet Industry Association of Australia
- Petcare Information and Advisory Service
- Veterinary Manufacturers & Distributors Association
- Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia

- Petcare Information and Advisory Service (PIAS) - Non-profit organisation committed to the promotion of socially responsible pet ownership
- Veterinary Manufacturers and Distributors Association (VMDA) - National association of veterinary pharmaceutical manufacturers
- Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA) - National association of Veterinary Nurses

We as the peak body for companion animals in Australia support many of the concepts within the National Animal Welfare Bill especially the concept “to ensure animal welfare issues are given adequate priority at a national level”. Additionally the ACAC supports the concept of consistent animal welfare legislation throughout Australia. However it is not clear how the “*National Animal Welfare Bill*” could provide a workable mechanism for the implementation of these commendable concepts.

While the intent of the Bill to advance animal welfare in Australia is admirable it is the view of the ACAC that the proposed model is unworkable and does not help further the field of animal welfare science in Australia.

One of our main concerns with the Bill is an apparent lack of engagement of all the potential stakeholders in the process of developing the Bill.

Additionally the ACAC believes that the process of advancing animal welfare in Australia is already in train with the implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS). We believe that although only in the early stages of implementation the AAWS will deliver better outcomes for the animals and animal industries of Australia, as it does include input from all the relevant stakeholders.

The Bill proposes to promote “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). Senator Bartlett has also identified that there should be 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”. Although Senator Bartlett has clearly identified the importance of the social capital of pets to Australian society and the significance of pet care industry this has not been included in this Bill. To achieve the desired outcomes expressed above by Senator Bartlett these issues need to be included in any animal welfare policy and the ACAC does not feel that they have been addressed in this Bill.

Another concern that the ACAC has identified with respect to the National Animal Welfare Bill is the current situation where individual States control their own animal welfare legislation. The ACAC notes that most of the relevant Legislation in the various States includes many of the proposals outlined in the National Bill. National Model Legislation to enable development of complimentary national and state animal

welfare laws is a preferred outcome. It would be difficult to achieve with the proposed Bill.

In summary, although the ACAC wholeheartedly supports the aim of implementing consistent and enforceable legislation to improve the welfare of animals across Australia, it firmly believes that the model proposed in the Bill will not be effective in achieving this outcome. The ACAC believes that the current developments such as the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy will be better able to deal with the important issues which the Bill sets out to address.

The Australian Companion Animal Council recommends that the proposed Bill be rejected. The ACAC would welcome the opportunity to address the Senate Committee and strongly endorses the further adoption of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy as the primary vehicle for the advancement of animal welfare in Australia.

Please contact Susie Chaseling, Executive Officer, ACAC Australia on 02 95559670 should you have any queries regarding this submission.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment in this matter.

Yours faithfully



Dr Kersti Seksel
President Australian Companion Animal Council