

On behalf of the Royal Perth Hospital Animal Ethics Committee (RPH-AEC) I wish to inform Parliament that we strongly oppose the proposed National Animal Welfare Bill. The Committee considers this Bill to be both unnecessary and irresponsible.

AECs already perform the stated purpose of the Bill, which is "to promote responsible care and use of animals". The membership, guidelines and terms of reference for AECs ensure the welfare of the animal is the primary consideration of any procedure using animals for teaching and/or scientific purposes, and that community concerns are represented in all decisions. Members of the committee give their time freely & if the proposed changes were introduced most of our AEC have indicated that they would resign.

Individual State Animal Welfare Acts, and State and National research funding bodies already require compliance with the Code of Practice for all teaching and research experiments involving animals. In addition, the States' Animal Welfare Acts already require animal suppliers and users to be licensed, and to submit annual reports of animal use.

Publication of AEC and other meetings considering licence approval, particularly for individuals conducting animal-based research, and allowing public access to the names and addresses of these individuals is totally irresponsible given the irrational and potentially violent nature of certain groups within the community. There is no justification for putting the researcher, AEC members and/or their families at risk in this way.

If this Bill is passed, there will be wide-spread resignation of Animal Ethics Committee members and a significant reduction in the number of researchers willing to conduct animal-based, teaching and research for fear of violence and intimidation both for themselves and their families (as is the current situation in England). This in turn will actually erode animal welfare regulation as well as impede advancements that are of significant benefit to the community as a whole.

Professor John Hall
Chair
AEC
Royal Perth Hospital