

Dear Productivity Commission,

I am writing to you as a behavioural biologist with a keen interest in human and non-human animal cognition, sentience, and welfare. Also, as a donor I am acutely aware of the immense pressure currently placed on animal rescues.

I appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report on philanthropy in Australia and provide comments. I fully support the need for reform of the current DGR system, as outlined in draft recommendation 6.1 and for the inclusion of animal welfare charities.

I believe my donations would be more effectively targeted at prevention, rather than remedy. Resources targeted at rescue are currently extremely stretched, and well thought through earlier welfare interventions could reduce pressures on rescues. As rescues are eligible for various grant streams, this could also create efficiencies for the public purse. Policy and advocacy charities have the potential to improve animal welfare on a large scale, and in underfunded areas such as welfare for farmed and aquatic animals, wildlife, and animals in research.

Animal welfare policy and advocacy charities, with very little government funding, are disproportionately affected by their lack of DGR status. Most major animal welfare charities rely on donations and bequests for between 70-99% of their income. Removal of these barriers will ensure that donors supporting preventative activities are not disadvantaged.

Animal charities are consistently in the top three causes supported by Australian donors. New fundraising channels would be opened up by expanding DGR eligibility criteria, such as workplace giving, corporate fundraising, major donor and philanthropic giving, Instagram and Facebook fundraisers, PayPal Giving Fund, and various third-party fundraising and crowd-funding platforms.

I also support the proposal for DGR for policy advocacy presented in the draft report. I believe that work that supports such advocacy should also be included such as policy development and community engagement. For animal advocacy groups, this includes the provision of scientific and specialist veterinary animal welfare advice to the public and government, and investigating and exposing illegal practices or non-compliance with regulations and animal welfare standards. Engaging the community and government will see the creation of more rigorous policy in line with best scientific knowledge, and provide channels for adoption and general education.

Sentience is well recognised in science now, and the lag is really in the cultural understanding. The articles linked to below are easily understood examples showing current understanding of non-human cognition including in domestic animals.

<https://www.science.org/content/article/not-dumb-creatures-livestock-surprise-scientists-their-complex-emotional-minds?>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-bees-have-feelings/>

Thank you for considering my feedback. I look forward to seeing the final report and the positive changes it could bring to the for-purpose sector in Australia.