

1st May, 2023

The Productivity Commission,
4 National Circuit,
Barton. A.C.T. 2600

Review of Philanthropy – May 2023

Chair, Deputy Chair and Commissioners

On behalf of our directors, staff and supporters we thank you for this opportunity to provide our submission to you.

Background

Animal Liberation was founded in 1976 and throughout those decades we have evolved into an organisation that provides education, has a free-call 1800 Cruelty Hotline for people throughout Australia maintaining anonymity. We respond to requests from government enquiries into wide ranging areas through submissions and are invited to give evidence at public hearings.

Having attended a webinar provided by you and hosted by Alex Robson which was very welcome, I tender the following:

Our organisation attempted to get DGR status in 2007 with the pro bono assistance of a senior legal person over an extended period of time. We provided, what I believe to be, a cogent and detailed reasoning of why our charity should be granted this vital fundraising means. We also had a meeting with the ATO and Treasury but were barely heard so this opportunity with its possible reforms is a positive opportunity. 16 years on we are delighted you are looking at this possibility “afresh.”

Not having DGR results in much lower donations. Many people who support the work we do will donate around tax time and Christmas but others balk when they realise there is no tax deductibility available.



Peer to peer fundraising requires DGR.

Of all the possible grant applications available we can only apply for less than 1% because we do not have DGR.

We are fortunate that for 47 years people in the wider community have championed the work we do because without tax deductibility it is becoming more and more difficult to survive in a climate of increasing hardship.

While we don't strictly rehome animals we do provide, as part of the work we do, the ability to connect people to no-kill shelters and sanctuaries.

People donate because, as mentioned, they trust and believe in the work being done by our charity. Given our longevity we have established our integrity and dedication.

We established a free-call 1800 Cruelty hotline close to 20 years ago having been inundated with calls from people in remote and regional NSW and other parts of Australia. People expressing their fears that because they live in a small community if they reported neglect/cruelty there would be negative ramifications, a not inconsiderate concern. We have a database of people expressing enormous appreciation for often just being heard. Our 1800 number is available 24 x 7 and is run by a former RSPCA senior inspector. Frequently these conversations in turn lead to the alleged perpetrator being advised how better to nurture their animals and failing that our information has led to warnings and prosecutions by authorities.

One of the questions raised at the webinar was how easy do charities make it for people to unsubscribe. Our response is this happens almost immediately. Any communications we send out have an "unsubscribe" link.

It is heartening that one of the intentions of the paper is "the scope is now widened for animal welfare." Over 90% of Australians care about animal welfare and this extends far beyond companion animals to incorporate those in agriculture, laboratories and wild animals (Cornish 2017; World Animal Protection 2020). This is a quantum societal leap from where our organisation began. People here and around the world would concede welfare rights for dogs and cats but that would be the extent of their consideration. The world is vastly different now and far more encompassing of all species. It is hopeful also that young people with access to the internet are pushing for greater recognition of animal welfare.

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The webinar and the paper request information as to our transparency. We are a member of the ACNC and our audited finances and annual incomings and expenditures are freely available for all to access.

Animal Liberation is frequently the first port of call for secondary and tertiary students requiring assistance with queries and interviews. We have a long history of being available to clarify or widen the scope of information for students and being invited to high schools and universities with tailored age appropriate information.

As the world evolves to fully realising the toll on the planet caused by many animal agribusinesses and their contribution to climate warming, we have invested time and expertise in providing academic information that is accessible. In addition we present helpful steps people can take to ameliorate their carbon footprints. We know this is essential for time-poor people who want the immediacy of information and options. Animal Liberation held the first carbon neutral festival in Australia approximately 15 years ago, festivals now undertaken by others and growing in their numbers.

Over the years we have funded low cost desexing for people on lower incomes and those on welfare. This has benefited those people and contributed to reducing numbers of unwanted cats and dogs.

We have also brought to the attention of the ACCC companies making fraudulent claims and this has resulted in high fines and changes to those companies' public announcements.

Further illustration of the regard with which Animal Liberation is held are the high rates of contact by broadsheets and other reputable media organisations for content and comment.

Prior to the establishment of Animal Liberation, society had little to no idea about the suffering of animals outside of companion dogs and cats. It was our organisation that put the annual plight of animals front and centre of people's minds. We highlighted the mutilation of farm animals (without anaesthesia) and helped bring awareness to the suffering of those in rodeos and circuses. In addition, Animal Liberation has placed focus on the dreadful suffering of the majority of animals in laboratories.



When we began in 1976, prior to awareness raising, the treatment of hundreds of thousands of animals in Australia went primarily unnoticed. Since our work began society's consciousness has grown along with worldwide acknowledgement of the sentience of all species and a growing call for improved welfare reform.

Charities like Animal Liberation have had to depend solely on the generosity of people without any assistance from any government. For us this has been a half a century. Times are now harsher, harder and more tightened than in decades previous and I hope you will give positive consideration to this aspect of the Review of Philanthropy.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Lynda Stoner
CEO

References

Cornish, A. Australian consumers' concerns for animal welfare: the effect of an animal welfare food rating system on consumer behaviour. Available via <https://www.rspca.org.au/sites/default/files/2017%20annual%20report%20Cornish.pdf> (2017).

World Animal Protection. Australia. Available via <https://api.worldanimalprotection.org/country/australia> (2020).

