



Northern  
Territory  
Government

# ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE annual report 2006/2007 financial year

**Animal Welfare Branch**

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Mr Elliot McAdam, MLA  
Minister for Local Government  
Parliament House  
DARWIN NT 0800

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in presenting to you, on behalf of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee established under the Animal Welfare Act, the Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2007, as required by regulation 13 of the Animal Welfare Regulations.

Yours sincerely



Dr Stephen Cutter  
Chairperson

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## CHAIRPERSON'S OVERVIEW

Welcome to the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Report for the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (the Committee). This report summarises the activities, achievements and challenges of the Committee during the 2006-2007 reporting year.

In performing its roles and functions, the Committee has had an exciting and productive year. Of particular interest this year is the Northern Territory's expanding participation in the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) with the Territory providing leadership and taking a place of pride in animal welfare on a national level as well as at home.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee's members for their continued commitment and support without which the activities and achievements summarised in this report would not be possible. So it is with thanks to all the members, the organisations they represent, and the executive officer that I present the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Annual Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Stephen Cutter'.

Dr. Stephen Cutter

Chairperson, AWAC

## LEGISLATIVE CHARTER

A Bill for the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (the Act) was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 19 August 1999 and was passed by the Legislative Assembly on 20 October 1999. Assent to the Act was given by the Administrator on 10 November 1999 and was brought into effect on 27 March 2000.

The Objectives of the Act are to –

- a) ensure that animals are treated humanely;
- b) prevent cruelty to animals; and
- c) promote community awareness about the welfare of animals.

## ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is a statutory body established by the Minister for Local Government under section 69 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and is responsible to the Minister.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The functions of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee as detailed in the Animal Welfare Act are;

- a) advising the Minister about animal welfare legislation and other matters relevant to animal welfare;
- b) investigating and reporting on matters relevant to animal welfare referred to it by the Minister;
- c) participating in the development of codes of practice and the review of adopted codes of practice;
- d) providing advice to bodies, organisations or the general community on programs for the improvement of community awareness about animal welfare; and
- e) any other functions prescribed by the Animal Welfare Regulations.

## ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Act provides for an Advisory Committee of at least eight members appointed in writing by the Minister in accordance with regulation 6 of the Animal Welfare Regulations.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee consists of ten members appointed by the Minister for Local Government pursuant to regulation 6 of the Animal Welfare Regulations. The members were nominated by, and represent the interests of the following organisations –

- Animal Welfare organisations incorporated in the NT (RSPCA NT Inc);
- Australian Veterinary Association Ltd;
- Local Government Association of the Northern Territory;
- Agency having the responsibility for the administration of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport);
- Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines;
- Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Inc;
- Charles Darwin University;
- Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (Parks and Wildlife Commission);
- Pet Industry Association of Australia; and
- Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous communities (AMRRIC).

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AS AT 30 JUNE 2007:

### Mr Philip Donohoe

Mr Donohoe was appointed as a member on 24 May 2006. He represented Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC) until December 2006 when he died suddenly in a tragic accident shortly before Christmas. Mr Donohoe was the Executive Director and a founding member of AMRRIC. It was through his tireless efforts that the AWAC saw the successful addition of AMRRIC to the committee. His short time on the committee laid the foundation for AMRRIC as a valued organization on the committee.

### Dr Stephen Cutter (Chairperson)

Dr Cutter continues to serve as the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee since 2004. Several years of commitment and service to the Committee saw him as the Member for the RSPCA (2001) and the Australian Veterinary Association Inc. (2004). Following the sad passing of Mr. Philip Donohoe, Dr Cutter who has also been a long standing member of AMRRIC, decided to take up the position left vacant by Mr Donohoe and represent AMRRIC instead of the Australian Veterinary Association. New representatives for the AVA will be introduced to the committee during the next year.

### Ms Jane Walsh

Ms Walsh was appointed as a member on 24 May 2006. She is the President of the RSPCA (NT) Inc. Ms Walsh represents an animal welfare organisation incorporated in the Territory.

### Mr Stuart Kenny

Mr Kenny was re-appointed as a member on 1 December 2004. He is the Executive Director of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Inc. and represents that organisation on the Committee.

### Prof. Robert Wasson

Professor Wasson was appointed as a member on 1 December 2004. Professor Wasson is a Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and represents Charles Darwin University.

### Mr Graham Franklin

Mr Franklin was appointed as a member on 17 March 2005. He is the Director of Animal Welfare and Water Safety, representing the Agency having responsibility for the administration of the Act, namely the Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport.

### Dr Mauricio Perez-Ruiz

Dr Perez-Ruiz, was appointed as a member 10 April 2006. Dr Perez Ruiz is the Senior Veterinary Officer for Biodiversity and Produce Integrity. He represents the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines. He is also the Northern Territory's representative on the National Consultative Council on Animal Welfare (NCCAW) and the Animal Welfare Working Group (AWWG).

### Mrs Judy Joyce

Mrs Joyce was re-appointed as a member on 1 December 2004. Mrs Joyce is an Alderman with the Palmerston City Council and represents the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory.

### Mr Scott Andresen

Mr Andresen was appointed as a member on 1 December 2004. Mr Andresen is the member representing the Pet Industry Association of Australia and operates a retail pet business in Alice Springs.

### Mr Tony Bowland

Mr Bowland was appointed as member on 18 July 2006. Mr Bowland is a principal scientist in Biodiversity and Wildlife Manager for the Parks and Wildlife Commission. He is the member representing the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts.

## ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE - ALTERNATE MEMBERS

The Animal Welfare Regulations provide for the Minister to appoint alternate members of the Committee. The alternate members and their representative body for the year ending 2006/2007 are listed below.

No alternate	Australian Veterinary Association
Mr Steve Walton	RSPCA (NT) Inc.
Mr Tony Searle	Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association
Ms Hemali Seneviratne	Charles Darwin University
Ms Amanda Shipway	Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport
Dr Richard Morton	Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
No alternate	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
Ms Lyndall Squires	Pet Industry Association of Australia
Ms Anne Celan	Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities
Ms Robyn Delaney	Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (Parks and Wildlife)

## NEW MEMBERS APPOINTED TO THE COMMITTEE

The term of office for members and alternate members is three years. Members may be re-appointed. The Committee welcomed three new members this year:

[Mr Tony Bowland](#), member for the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (Parks and Wildlife Commission)

[Ms Robyn Delaney](#), alternate for the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (Parks and Wildlife Commission)

[Mr Tony Searle](#), alternate for the NT Cattlemen's association

## ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

There is a statutory requirement under Regulation 11 of the Animal Welfare Regulations for the Committee to hold at least two meetings each year. Two meetings, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> meetings were held in Darwin during the year 2006/2007.

- 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting - 17 November 2006
- 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting - 25 May 2007

The member's attendance at meetings during 2006/2007 is listed in the table below.

Organisation	Name of Member	Meetings Attended
Charles Darwin University	Robert Wasson	1
	Hemali Seneviratne (Alternate)	0
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NT) Inc.	Jane Walsh	2
	Steve Walton (Alternate)	0
Australian Veterinary Association Ltd Northern Territory Division	Stephen Cutter	2
	No alternate	0
Local Government Association of the Northern Territory	Judy Joyce	2
	No Alternate	0
Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport	Graham Franklin	2
	Amanda Shipway (Alternate)	1
Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines	Mauricio Perez-Ruiz	1
	Richard Morton (Alternate)	0
Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Inc	Stuart Kenny	0
	Tony Searle (Alternate)	0
Department Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts	Tony Bowland	1
	Robyn Delaney (Alternate)	1
Pet Industry Association of Australia	Scott Andresen	2
	Lyndall Squires (Alternate)	0
Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities	Philip Donohoe	1
	Anne Celan	0

## ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport provide executive, administrative, and financial support as well as research capacity to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. Ms Mary Gearin-Smith is the Executive Officer. The Director of Animal Welfare, Mr Graham Franklin, provides additional support through the Animal Welfare Branch. Some of these areas of support are highlighted in this report.

## ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

The activities of the Committee for the year have been varied and have been met with challenges and successes.

There appears to be a visible increase in public interest in animal welfare issues in the Northern Territory. This is evident in the increasing number of matters brought to the Committee; the increase in the scope and nature of the enquiries made to the Animal Welfare Branch; and the apparent increase in interest in animal matters taken by the media. Reports through the media have had their own special challenges but over all it appears that the Community supports the welfare of animals in general. The demand on the Government to take action on behalf of the plight of animals is increasing. In response to this, the Committee and the Animal Welfare Branch have supported the introduction, revision and adoption of codes of practice and stronger enforcement tools.

There has also been an increase in the Territory's involvement with animal welfare issues on a national level. The Committee has supported the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy throughout the year and works toward its implementation in the Territory.

## THE ANIMAL WELFARE BRANCH

The Animal Welfare Branch (the Branch) is a division of the Department of Local Government Housing and Sport. The Branch provides administrative support and feedback to the Committee on its activities though the year.

Other functions and activities of the Branch include:

- Receiving, recording and investigating animal welfare reports
- Prosecuting offenders
- Issuing licenses for research and teaching involving animals
- Providing advice and support for community awareness activities
- Providing support and training for Animal Welfare Inspectors
- Providing support and advice to other Departments and agencies

Their role has expanded this year to greater involvement in the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, the review of the Animal Welfare Act, national reporting, cross Departmental relationships.

### Enforcement

Enforcement has always been a major function of the Branch. The Committee plays an integral part in the administration and enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act. The [Inspectorate](#) section of the Branch investigates reports of animal cruelty and neglect across the Territory and across the variety of animals as described in the Act. As animal welfare issues gain public interest and public awareness increases, so does the reporting of alleged offences. The Branch received and investigated 297 reports of animal neglect or cruelty for the reporting year.

### Education and Training

The Animal Welfare Authority appoints all Animal Welfare Inspectors in the Northern Territory (except Police Officers). There are appointed Inspectors in various Departments or Branches of the Northern Territory Government such and Parks and Wildlife Commission; in some local Councils, such as the Katherine Town Council; and outside agencies, such as the RSPCA. Additionally all Police Officers are Animal Welfare Inspectors as they carry the same powers under the Animal Welfare Act. The Branch has the responsibility of not only appointing and co-coordinating the efforts of these Inspectors but also for providing guidelines, procedures and training. Bringing all of these agencies together for the common goal of improved welfare of all animals is inherently difficult and highlights the importance of training.

To meet this challenge, the Branch hosted its first cross-departmental training workshop in December 2006. The workshop was attended by Animal Welfare Inspectors from the Police (enforcement); Primary Industry (stock animals); RSPCA (domestic and companion animals); Local Government (inspectorate across all animals); Parks and Wildlife Commission (animals in the wild); and Palmerston City Council (animal management).

The Animal Welfare Authority addressed the workshop and the Branch provided in-house trainers. A major focus of the workshop was to provide in-depth coverage of the Animal Welfare Act. Attendees also had a chance to ask questions. The discussion was active and informative. Additional training in specialist areas was provided by guest speakers from the Department of Justice (prosecutions, rules of evidence, and court procedures); the Department of Primary Industry (stock animals); and the Northern Territory Wildlife Park (animals in zoos and aquaria). The contribution from the guest speakers provided the attendees with valuable expert advice and insight as well as enrichment to the workshop.

The workshop provided training for the Inspectors and gave them an opportunity to meet and network with other Inspectors from across the Territory. Feedback was positive across the board with the attendees gaining a better understanding of the Act and their role as Animal Welfare Inspectors.

## Prosecutions

Prosecution of offenders is an inevitable part of the enforcement process. The Branch continues to develop good investigation procedures while remaining mindful of the community demand for successful prosecution of serious offenders.

## Animal Welfare Act Review

The Animal Welfare Act is our most important enforcement tool. The Committee recognises the need for legislation which is strong and fair. There have been difficulties in prosecuting offenders due to inconsistencies or ambiguities in the Act. The Committee recommended to the Minister that the Act be reviewed. The Department and the Branch have supported the review by providing extensive research and

development as well and the financial resources needed. The review is expected to be completed by April 2008.

### Carriage of a Broad range of Animal Welfare issues

As the lead agency for administering the Act, the Branch has evolved into the first point of contact with the public regarding all animal issues. Consequently the Branch handles a multitude of phone enquires, requests for information and responses to media reports while keeping the Minister informed on contemporary animal welfare issues.

The demands on the Branch over the year have increased in every area of responsibility. However, it is in this area that the Branch has expanded the most. Recourses and funding have not increased in line with this. In spite of this, the Branch can boast that legislative requirements and Departmental expectations have been met. However without injection of additional recourses it will be difficult to keep the momentum and future advances are at a critical risk.

### Inter-department and outside agency co-operation

Co-operation with other Departments and outside agencies this year has been unprecedented. The outcomes have been positive. The Animal Welfare Branch and the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines regularly conduct joint investigations involving livestock animals with successful outcomes. Additionally, two successful prosecutions have been possible due to the cooperation and consultation with other Departments. One of these prosecutions was conducted by the Police with support and shared resources from the Animal Welfare Branch and the RSPCA. Another was conducted by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (Parks and Wildlife Commission) which combined breaches of the NT Wildlife Act and the Animal Welfare Act.

The Committee recognises that these and other success would not be possible without the expert advice and support from other Departments. The intention of the Act is to protect animals across a broad range of species and the specialist and expert advice

provided by other Departments such as Primary Industry in the area of livestock animals and Fisheries for aquatic animals, for example, has been invaluable.

These co-operative efforts continue to expand into other branches of the Northern Territory Government through the development of Memorandums of Understanding. The first of these formal agreements is due to be signed in the later part of 2007.

The Branch's ability to draw and nurture this support and cooperation allows the Department to continue to play an increasing role of leadership in animal welfare issues in the Territory. This highlights the Branches position as the lead agency in not only administering the Act but also highlights its expanding responsibilities for dealing with an increasing range of animal welfare issues. As the Branch looks to other Departments for support, they in turn look to the Branch for leadership in the areas of enforcement and prosecution, education and awareness, and the promotion of animal welfare in general.

## CODES OF PRACTICE

One of the key responsibilities of the Committee is to review and recommend the adoption of Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals in the Northern Territory. These codes are not enforceable and are intended to be a benchmark for "best practice" guidelines. The codes can, at best, be used as supporting evidence in the event of the need for intervention and enforcement. The Committee agrees that serious breaches need to be enforceable and the demands for the investigation and prosecution of offenders require the adoption of enforceable standards to replace the codes as they presently exist. This shift to required standards as opposed to self regulated guidelines is in line with the objectives of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.

## NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (NCCAW)

The NCCAW continues to play an important role in developing the Codes of Practice and Guidelines for the Welfare of Animals which have been or are proposed to be adopted in the Northern Territory. Although the emphasis is changing toward the development of Standards rather than Codes of Practice, the NCCAW remains the primary source of feedback to the Committee from other States and Territories in this

area. The member for the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines, Mr Perez-Ruiz is the Northern Territory representative on the NCCAW and provides the Committee with regular updates on their activities, discussions and developments.

This year the Committee recommended the adoption of the revised NCCAW Standards for the Care and Treatment of Rodeo Livestock. The Minister endorsed this Code in May 2007.

## THE AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY (AAWS)

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy is an Australian Government initiative aimed at the entire Australian community and takes into account all uses of animals. Because animals affect our lives in so many different ways, this strategy touches nearly every person in Australia in some way. Consequently, animal welfare is everybody's responsibility.

The Committee has continued its support and commitment to the AAWS. This year the focus of the Strategy has been on consistency of Standards and Legislation throughout the States and Territories. The Committee member for the Department of Local Government and Director of the Animal Welfare Branch, Mr Graham Franklin, represents the Northern Territory on the national committee. He provides valuable feedback to the Committee from other States and Territories.

The Committee member for the Department of Primary Industry, fisheries and Mines, Mr Perez-Ruiz, represents the Northern Territory in the AAWS through his involvement with the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW) and the Australian Animal Welfare Working Group. These two groups have been working though out the year on the development of a livestock transport standard. This standard is expected to be the first of the animal welfare standards to be adopted in the Northern Territory.

## PROMOTION AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

One of the key objectives of the Animal Welfare Act is to promote community awareness about the welfare of animals. To achieve this, the Animal Welfare Branch

takes the opportunity to promote the welfare of animals wherever possible and whenever recourses allow. The Branch proudly assists and supports community events and animal welfare interest groups to elevate community awareness in animal welfare.

### [World Animal Day October 2006](#)

World Animal Day is celebrated across the world on October 4 as the Feast Day of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of Animals. The Committee supported the coordination of the annual celebration for 2006 in conjunction with RSPCA, The NT Police, Darwin and Palmerston City Councils and other animal stakeholders. The objective of the event is to promote responsible pet ownership and provide an opportunity for children to interact with animals and promote community awareness about animal welfare. The result of was a successful day of fun, food, and plenty of activities for the kids.

### [Million Paws Walk May 2007](#)

The Million Paws Walk is an RSPCA Australia fundraising initiative. The Branch provided support with advertising and marketing in the lead up to the event as well as participation on the day. This event continues to be popular with Darwin resident dogs (and their owners). Animal Welfare inspectors answered questions, passed out tattoos to the children and passed out brochures relating to the Animal Welfare Act. Their presence raised community awareness regarding animal welfare in general and lifted awareness of the Branch and what it does.

### [The Inspectorate](#)

Animal Welfare Inspectors are continually promoting the welfare of animals by providing advice though the numerous phone and email enquires and through discussion with animal owners on site during routine investigations. Their contribution to Community awareness cannot be over emphasised.

## TOPICS OF INTEREST

Individuals, interest groups, various stakeholders and Government Departments have presented the Committee with topics of interest and areas of concern for discussion. These have been responded to accordantly. They have also provided the members with valuable information and enrichment of the debate on animal welfare issues.

Some to the topic this year included:

- The humane disposal of unwanted pet fish
- The sale of pet birds through pet shops
- Feral camels
- Mulesing
- Rodeo Livestock
- Land transport of livestock

## PRESENTATIONS

The Committee's member for Primary Industry, Mr Perez-Ruiz gave a PowerPoint presentation on the recent developments of the AAWS. This presentation provided an overview of the strategy, where its focus will be in the next year and what has been achieved so far. The presentation provided an update of the AAWS for the members and it was particularly timely for the new member.

## CONCLUSION

During 2006-2007, the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee made a valuable contribution to animal welfare in the Northern Territory. The Advisory Committee will continue to strive towards improving animal welfare, raising community awareness and providing expert advice to the Minister and the community on animal welfare issues.