

28th March 2022

Portfolio Committee 2 - Health

RE: Use of primates and other animals in medical research in New South Wales

Animal Care Australia Inc. (ACA) represents the interests of all hobbyist and pet animal keepers nationally. Our members are comprised of most major animal keeping representative bodies including those representing dogs, cats, birds, horses, small mammals, reptiles, fish and exhibited animals and in a broader capacity, those kept in captivity.

ACA acknowledges the greater extent of the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry falls outside our purview, with the exception of how animal welfare is ensured, implemented and continues after research, where the animals have been rehomed.

Our perspective and input is limited to the experience of our Committee and Membership. Some have personally worked in the medical research field, and others have adopted former research animals

Therefore, ACA would like to make the following statements:

1. **Animal Rights is not a science. It is not animal welfare - and should not be given weight out of context to appease a small, noisy number of Animal Rights Extremists (groups).**
2. **ACA does not believe the general public are qualified or have the sufficient knowledge on the subject matter of this Inquiry in order to comment in good faith and should not be given a louder platform than experienced industry experts.**
3. **Re-naming the escapee baboon simply exploited him and his colony in order to garner public sympathy.**
4. **ACA supports the scientific method and the systems already in place to approve, monitor and review medical research conducted on animals in NSW.**
5. **ACA acknowledges medical research benefits both humans and animals, with no health risks to the public.**
6. **ACA supports the use of modern non-animal technologies and encourages the continued reduction of animals used in medical research.**
7. **ACA does not support a total ban on the use of animals in medical research due to the potential unintended consequences on the veterinary sector.**
8. **ACA is satisfied that the importing, breeding and use of animals in medical research is currently well regulated and has proper oversight.**
9. **ACA supports increased transparency and accountability on all issues that could impact animal welfare.**
10. **ACA is genuinely surprised that this Inquiry has proceeded to this point, to discuss an extreme philosophical perspective, with no basis in reality, and at a cost to the tax payer.**

Animal Care Australia would like to thank Portfolio Committee 2 – Health, for providing us with the opportunity to provide feedback for this Inquiry.

Animal Rights as an ideology may have its place, but it is NOT in scientific conversations such as this.

This submission can be publicly listed.

On behalf of the Animal Care Australia Committee,



Michael Donnelly
President, Animal Care Australia.
0400 323 843

**Portfolio Committee 2 –
Use of primates and
other animals in medical
research in New South
Wales - 2022**



MARCH 29 2022

**ANIMAL CARE AUSTRALIA
STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSION**

Portfolio Committee 2 – Use of primates and other animals in medical research in New South Wales

Introduction:

Animal Care Australia Inc. (ACA) represents the interests of all hobbyist and pet animal keepers nationally. Our members are comprised of most major animal keeping representative bodies including those representing dogs, cats, birds, horses, small mammals, reptiles, fish and exhibited animals and in a broader capacity, those kept in captivity.

Animal Care Australia would like to thank Portfolio Committee 2 – Health, for providing us with the opportunity to provide feedback for this Inquiry.

Prologue:

‘Medical Research’ is a very broad topic.

Australian society, like most human societies, is by nature, utilitarian. **Utilitarianism is defined as “a doctrine that Actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority”** (dictionary.com, 2022). It’s what we call ‘the norm’ – what the majority agree with. This means we farm animals to eat, catch fish, ride horses, use guide dogs and send animals into space before we send people. It’s the same reasons we use animals in medical research. The vast majority of Australians ethically support this approach.

The scientific method is “a method or procedure that has characterized natural science since the 17th century, consisting in systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses.” (Dictionary.com, 2022). In the developed world, including Australia, the scientific method is employed to objectively assess whether our assumptions and actions are correct and justified. It is an ongoing review process. The legislative system has a similar process to set, assess, and review legislation. This is based on the scientific method.

Animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if, as indicated by scientific evidence, it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress. (World Organisation for Animal Health) **“Animal welfare science is a relatively new scientific discipline, evolving mostly from within veterinary medicine over the latter half of the twentieth century into an independent specialty in its own right ...”** (Frontiers in Veterinary Science¹). **“... and was formally recognised as a distinct discipline of veterinary medicine in 2012”** (Advances in Agricultural Animal Welfare, Hoenig/Coetzee, 2018). **Animal welfare science has become part of the core curriculum for many veterinary degrees, is a recognized specialty**

¹ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2015.00016/full?>

qualification within the veterinary professions of Europe, USA, and Australia. Many universities now offer subjects and degrees in Animal Welfare Science, including The University of Melbourne, which even has a dedicated Animal Welfare Science Centre, which opened in 1997.

Regardless of what society's utilitarian desires are, Animal Welfare standards and the scientific method of review are well established and respected in Australia to ensure that animals have protections from cruelty, unnecessary harm and continue to have a place in a human dominated world.

“Animal rights is the philosophy according to which many or all sentient animals have moral worth that is independent of their utility for humans, and that their most basic interests — such as in avoiding suffering — should be afforded the same consideration as similar interests of human beings.” (Wikipedia, 2022) Animal Rights is an extreme ethical position that animals cannot be used or owned by humans and is held by a minority of Australians.

An estimate by Vegan Australia suggests this is less than 2% of the population. It is worth noting that not all vegans support animal rights (veganism is a diet, but animal rights is an ideology or passion) – but statistics separating animal rights supporters from vegans are not readily available. The real number is likely to be miniscule, so vegans are often mislabelled as Animal Rights supporters to artificially inflate their numbers.

The Extremists are the people who go further into illegal activities such as trespassing, stealing animals from farms, and harassing anyone that works with animals, online or in person, but let's be generous and round it up to 2%.

Animal Rights is not a science.

It is not animal welfare - and should not be given weight out of context to appease a small, noisy number of Animal Rights Extremists (groups).

To combat this, Animal Rights groups have recently adopted the new term "Animal Protection" to replace "Animal Rights", but the terms are interchangeable.

Animal Care Australia's perspective:

ACA's primary purview is animal welfare.

Our perspective is limited to the experience of our Committee and Membership. Some have personally worked in the medical research field, and others have adopted former research animals.

With this in mind we do not consider ourselves to be experienced industry experts, outside of reviewing and consulting on the practices for protecting the welfare of animals within research fields.

Further, the vast majority of the public, if prompted would have a 'blinker' perspective of what exactly is involved with the use of animals within medical research.

These blinkers would be guided by their extremely limited access to accurate information – predominantly due to the need by research institutes to remain protective of their work and the animals from the Extremists targeting.

Extremists’ propaganda and behaviour has only enhanced the need for a ‘veil of secrecy’ rather than transparency. The well-being of personnel (and the animals) is often being threatened.

This same propaganda taints the information available for the public. Therefore:

ACA does not believe the general public are qualified or have the sufficient knowledge on the subject matter of this Inquiry in order to comment in good faith and should not be given a louder platform than experienced industry experts.

So how did we get here?

ACA is aware that this Inquiry was initiated in response to the highly unusual event of several baboons escaping transportation to Royal Prince Alfred hospital.

The male baboon was due to undergo a vasectomy. This procedure was in fact designed to allow him to remain within the colony of baboons that he had known to live out the remainder of his life with his family. Without this, he would most likely have needed to be separated from his family.

ACA learned that many general assumptions and mistruths were presented by Animal Rights Extremists at the time.

ACA acknowledges the responsible provision of animal welfare being provided by the facility in pursuing the vasectomy, along with the following:

- He had human standard care for his procedure, which probably could have been provided by an experienced vet.
- The facility transported him for his procedure with several of his family members. It was not strictly necessary but was an additional step to ensure the good welfare of the animals, and to keep them calm and relaxed in unusual surroundings.
- There is no evidence that these animals were ever ‘experimented on’, despite this being claimed by animal rights groups.
- The escape was unfortunate, and we cannot comment on the specifics that we are not privy to; however, we are relieved that no animals (or people) were harmed in the incident. A positive outcome.
- The available facts of the incident all point to a high standard of care, above and beyond minimum requirements, and a genuine concern to maintain the emotional health of the animals beyond the immediate moment.

This is good welfare.

Predictably, at the time of escape, the Animal Rights Groups exploited the opportunity to criticise the captivity of all animals.

*The night of their escape I made them a promise:
“We will take your story to Parliament my friends and force the world to listen.”
- Emma Hurst, via Facebook. 1st February 2022*

The most disturbing manoeuvre by the Animal Rights Extremist groups in their pursuit to garner support was to rename the baboon involved. We were perplexed to see them start calling him Alfred (because he escaped the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital).

Why was this so disturbing to us?

Well, he HAS a name already. He was never ‘just a number’. Why would they give him a new name?

To claim him as belonging to their Animal Rights Extremists? Don’t they abhor animal ownership? They are currently pursuing other bills and amendments to end animal ownership, end property status and give animals personhood citing this very reason. Why would they name him for themselves?

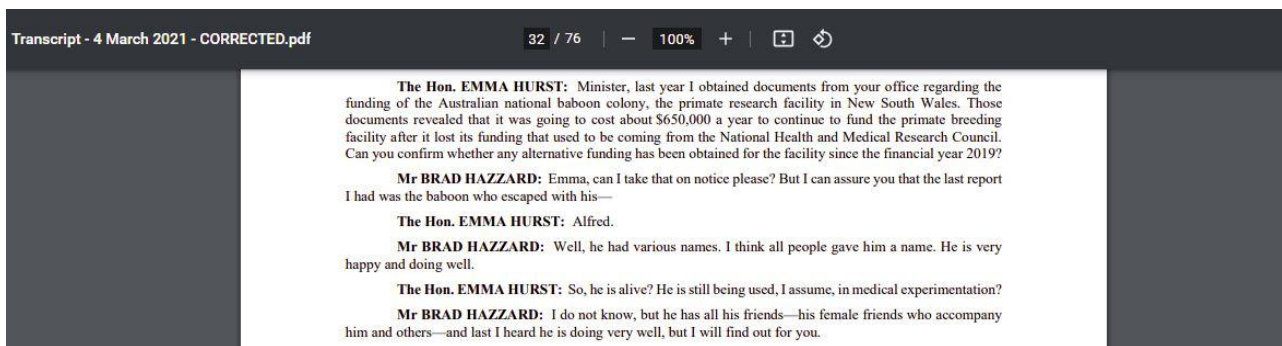


Image taken from: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/2529/Transcript-March 2021-CORRECTED.pdf>

ACA came to the conclusion that a utilitarian approach is acceptable even to the Animal Rights Extremists when it suits them.

Re-naming the escapee baboon simply exploited him and his colony in order to garner public sympathy.

This is the same hypocrisy that sees Emma Hurst actively supporting the use of contraceptives on brumbies, despite that technology being a result of medical research on animals. She now wants a medical research trial conducted on the animals here in Australia.

This is preferable to Ms Hurst, because she will not support brumbies being rehomed where they will be trained and ridden by humans.

“Australia is well-positioned to take advantage of developments in immunocontraceptives overseas. But despite significant progress in other countries, there has never been a trial

of immunocontraceptives on wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park, and there is no plan for a trial set out in the 2021 Wild Horse Management Plan. This needs to change.”
- Emma Hurst, https://www.emmahurstmp.com/fertility_control 2022

ACA is genuinely surprised that this Inquiry has proceeded to this point, to discuss an extreme philosophical perspective, with no basis in reality, and at a cost to the taxpayer.

Animal Care Australia’s Review of the Terms of Reference:

(a) the nature, purpose and effectiveness of medical research being conducted on animals in New South Wales, and the potential public health risks and benefits posed by this research;

ACA supports the scientific method and the systems already in place to approve, monitor and review medical research conducted on animals in NSW, including the 3 R’s.

The 3 R’s have seen the number of animals used in research decline as other alternatives are developed. The medical research industry is heavily regulated and monitored both internally and externally. There is no risk to public health.

Medical research often results in procedures and pharmaceuticals that ultimately improve animal welfare - primarily through the veterinary industry. Hip and knee replacements are available to dogs, for example, which were developed for humans, through dogs in animal research. Venom/toxin research benefits animals as much as people.

We **want** to see Australians have access to better medical care, procedures and pharmaceuticals to help them look after their pets and other animals to an ever-increasing higher standard. The same level of funding is simply not available to the veterinary and animal science fields as it is for medical research for people.

And it seems we are not the only ones who support its benefits.

The Animal Justice Party nationally recognises the benefits and effectiveness through their support of the use of vaccines, including the Covid-19 vaccine, despite having been thoroughly tested on mice, ferrets and monkeys.

“The AJP recognises the basic scientific fact that vaccinations have been among the most successful of all modern medical interventions.”

- <https://animaljusticeparty.org/positions/on-vaccinations> 2022

On the 25th of March 2022 the Federal Government has announced a \$58m package to support women with Endometriosis. This is in addition to the \$9.5m announced on 28th May 2020, for medical research into the disease.

Endometriosis is a common yet frequently under-recognised chronic disease. It affects one in every ten Australian women and girls, with the average diagnosis taking between seven to ten years.

It is a highly individualised disease, with its symptoms and impact ranging significantly from person to person. It often leads to severe chronic pain and in some cases, compromised fertility and sexual function.

The Government's investment comes from its landmark Medical Research Future Fund's Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research Initiative.

Medical research on Endometriosis is carried out on various rodents and primates.

In addition to vaccines and Endometriosis, let's not forget other important advances, such as the ability to perform organ transplants, grafts and re-growth of tissue – none of which would be available today without medical research involving animals.

When it comes down to it, whether it's our own life, or that of our loved ones, we all gladly benefit from the medical advancements that have been achieved through animal research.

What about the animals after research?

ACA members have adopted ex-research mice, rats, rabbits and cats from various facilities. They had no concerns about the past handling of their new animals. The animals were described as friendly, curious, and healthy.

The only complaints expressed to ACA were in relation to the adoption standards being too restrictive, and too high. The adoption process is too thorough and time consuming. We are informed there is an interview for potential new owners of mice lasting for up to an hour.

This demonstrates the concern researchers have to ensure their animals welfare will be met, even after research.

(b) the costs associated with animal research, and the extent to which the New South Wales and Federal Government is commissioning and funding the importing, breeding and use of animals in medical research in New South Wales.

Most research institutes are not funded by the state governments they are funded by organisations such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), JDRF (formally known as The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation) and the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) started during the global financial crisis. Researchers have to apply for grants to undertake their research from these bodies.

(c) the availability, effectiveness and funding for alternative approaches to animal research methods and technologies, and the ability of researchers to meet the 3 R's of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement;

ACA supports the use of modern non-animal technologies and encourages the continued reduction of animals used in medical research.

We acknowledge and support use of the 3r's, with considerations and justifications being provided before the research is approved. This process is completed with every ethics application that is submitted.

ACA does not support a total ban on the use of animals in medical research due to the potential unintended consequences on the veterinary sector.

We also accept that total replacement of all animal models may not be possible.

(d) the ethical and animal welfare issues surrounding the importing, breeding and use of animals in medical research;

ACA is satisfied that the importing, breeding and use of animals in medical research is currently well regulated and has proper oversight. The conditions these animals are maintained take into consideration the 5 freedoms of welfare including their enrichment, health care and nutrition. Minimum standards and animal care standards are higher and stricter than farming, horse racing or companion animal keeping.

The breeding of these animals is undertaken by animal technicians who have undergone years of training. Animals are bred for only the numbers that are required and over breeding is not permitted.

The transportation of animals is undertaken with high welfare and disease-free standards. Animals are transported with the availability of food and water in secure containers or crates dependent on the species. There are strict protocols for transport, including virus testing, for any animal to be able to leave or enter a facility.

All procedures undertaken on animals must be pre-approved by an ethics committee of which includes a member of the public. This member has no research experience and provides 'social conscience' to the committee to ensure that anything being undertaken during projects would be acceptable by the average person.

Ethics committee members must represent at least one of each of the following:

- Category A: a veterinarian
- Category B: an animal researcher
- Category C: a person with a demonstrated commitment to animal welfare who is not involved with the establishment, animal research or the supply of animals for research
- Category D: a volunteer from the public who does not fit the requirements of the other categories, is not associated with the establishment and who has never been involved in the use of animals for research.

(e) the adequacy of the current regulatory regime regarding the use of animals in medical research, particularly in relation to transparency and accountability;

ACA supports increased transparency and accountability on all issues that could impact animal welfare.

We recognise and acknowledge that the industry and those who work within or are directly related to it, have been regularly attacked for decades by Animal Rights Extremists.

The safety of people and the animals in the industry must be actively protected. They have good reason to be concerned. These have not always been empty threats.

Subsequently, the Animal Rights Extremists fail to recognise that they are the cause of the lack of transparency when they physically, verbally or cyber bully researchers and establishments. If this was not the case institutes and hospitals would be far more transparent and in doing so, be able to educate the public that are not already engaged in the sciences.

Currently the risk of being infiltrated by an Animal Rights Extremist who could potentially “let animals free” would sabotage the research, and risk injury or disease and impact the animals.

ACA does not see a good solution to this issue. Animal Rights Extremists are not taken seriously in the courts, such as when stealing animals and removing them from traceability networks, or in circumstances such as the deplorable example of the Gippy Goat Café case. The café is a good example of an animal agriculture business that operated in full transparency for its customers to learn about goats and the milk industry. It only took a small number of obsessed, malicious actors to close them down with threatening calls and visits to harass customers, protest and steal animals. The response from authorities was embarrassingly inadequate.

What would these same people do if the medical research industry opened its doors to the public? A \$1 fine in response to all of the damage inflicted on the Gippy Goat Café demonstrates that the authorities do not appreciate the real risk that Animal Rights Groups present to animal industries of all kinds, and without taking these threats more seriously, government does not have the means to respond appropriately to resolve it.

ACA will defer to the industry to suggest how improved transparency and safety from extremists can be balanced successfully.

(f) overseas developments regarding the regulation and use of animals in medical research; and

Australia actually has some of the strictest regulations when it comes to medical research on animals.

ACA will defer to the industry to address whether overseas developments should be adopted or avoided in Australia.

(g) any other related matters.

We have addressed Animal Rights Extremism and its hypocrisy and impact on medical research throughout this submission.

Summary Conclusion:

The vast majority of Australians fully support the use of animals in medical research and are far more unlikely to feel the urge to respond to an Inquiry such as this, as they don't feel strongly on the issue.

Animal Rights Extremists have been agitating their followers for weeks to write to this Inquiry to supposedly represent average Australians. They're not average Australians.

We encourage the Committee to review the submissions and note how many more than just 2% of the submissions are from Animal Rights Extremists and Supporters and give them the weight they deserve in this matter – NONE!

Animal Rights as an ideology may have its place, but it is NOT in scientific conversations such as this.

On behalf of the Animal Care Australia Committee,



Michael Donnelly
President
Animal Care Australia