

Internal process for the development and review of RSPCA Australia policy documents

(adopted 21/06/08)

1 General principles

- 1.1 RSPCA policy statements and position papers are intended to clearly set out the view of the RSPCA on key animal welfare issues for both an internal and external audience as well as policies on governance or operational matters for internal audiences only.
- 1.2 The development and review of all RSPCA policy statements and position papers (collectively known as policy documents) must ensure that they:
 - reflect the philosophy articulated in *RSPCA Australia Animals Charter, Objectives* and the *Five freedoms for animals*, and
 - are evidence based, developed through broad consultation and are representative of member societies.
- 1.3 RSPCA Australia's Strategic Plan must reflect these policy documents

2 Definitions

2.1 *Policy statement*

2.1.1 A *policy statement* is a straightforward statement or declaration of RSPCA policy on a particular animal welfare matter, governance or operational topic or subject. Such policy statements are usually short and concise and include a clear description and a brief rationale of the basis for the policy, for example: why did it come about and what need does it address.

2.1.2 A policy, should be relevant and/or applicable and unlikely to change materially in the short term. Some policy statements are externally focused, that is they present the RSPCA's views on the treatment of animals in the wider community. Other policies are internally focused, that is they refer to actions undertaken by the RSPCA itself, but provide a benchmark for other organisations carrying out similar activities, e.g. policies for the rehoming of animals from RSPCA shelters or regarding the use of animals at RSPCA shelters for study or teaching.

2.2 *Position paper*

A *position paper* is an explanatory document and is intended to be more comprehensive than an RSPCA policy on a particular topic or subject. A position paper may include a restatement of a related policy, but it also contains background information and discussion or statements of how policy should be implemented or provide guidance on how certain activities should be carried out. The aim is to provide a more in-depth understanding of the subject involved and the rationale behind the position taken. A position paper may refer to outside sources through the use of key references or footnotes. Position papers, as they are more

detailed than a policy statement, must be responsive to change and should be reviewed or withdrawn if no longer relevant or applicable.

Note: Policy documents published or reviewed prior to June 2008 may not conform to the above definitions.

3 Adoption of policy and position documents

3.1 Policy statements

Policy statements are adopted, or later amended, on the unanimous vote of the RSPCA Australia Board after consultation with member Societies, and following the recommendation of the PRC or other Working Group as agreed by The Board. Compliance with policy statements is binding on all member Societies.

3.2 Position papers

Position papers are adopted, or amended, on the majority vote of the RSPCA Australia Board if they concern issues related to existing, adopted policies, or on the unanimous vote of The Board if the position is outside adopted policies. The Board considers position papers on the recommendation of the PRC or other Working Group as agreed by The Board. Position papers are intended to assist in interpreting and disseminating RSPCA policy or to provide guidance on specific animal welfare issues to both an internal and external audience.

4 Review of policy documents

4.1 All policy documents should be automatically reviewed within six years of publication or last review date. The review may recommend amendment, withdrawal or endorsement of the existing document.

4.2 Where it is considered that an existing policy document requires review outside the agreed six-year cycle, a proposal for amendment must be tabled at The Board, as set out below.

4.3 All published policy documents must include a date of publication or last review.

5 Proposals for new or amended policy documents (Table 1)

5.1 Proposals for new or amended policy documents must meet the requirements of the definitions and general principles set out above. The purpose of the document and the nature of the issue will determine which of the two formats (policy statement or position paper) should be followed.

5.2 Prior to developing a proposal for a new policy document, existing policy documents should be examined to determine whether the proposal conflicts or overlaps with existing documents and whether it is an issue of broad concern to the RSPCA.

5.3 Proposals for amendments to existing policy documents should take into account the date when the policy document was last reviewed.

- 5.4 Proposals must be presented to the Board in the form of a discussion paper, which will be held as a record of the basis for the policy change. The discussion paper should include the following information:
- An explanation of the background to, and reasons for, the proposal. This should explain the intent of the proposed policy document and, where relevant, include supporting evidence such as references to other sources or documents.
 - Details of any existing policy documents that are relevant to the proposal or are intended to be replaced or amended as a result of the proposal.
 - Suggested (provisional) wording of the new or amended policy document or a description of what the wording should cover.
- 5.5 The proposal is then put before the Board for determination. The Board will either agree with the proposal *in principle* or reject it. If the proposal is agreed to *in principle*, it is referred as follows:
- if the proposal relates to animal welfare; to the Policy Review Committee
 - if the proposal relates to a non-animal welfare matter, to a specifically established working group.

Table 1: Key steps in policy development

Step	Action	Comment
1	Initiation of a new policy document or review of an existing policy Discussion paper is prepared and tabled at the Board. If the NC agrees, the issue proceeds to step 2	Identification by member Societies, the PRC or staff of RSPCA Australia of a need or gap in current policy documents or change in relevance of an issue or Because six years have passed since date of last review.
2	Review or development is undertaken by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRC if it is related to animal welfare • Specific working groups if the matter relates to other issues 	The drafting or revision of documents must reflect the philosophy articulated in <i>RSPCA Australia animals charter, Objectives, and Five freedoms for animals</i> and draw upon existing policy documents.
3	Decision-making or approval process	The decision-making body is the Board

6 Policy Review Committee

- 6.1 The Policy Review Committee (PRC) acts as the oversight body of the policy development process for all policy documents relating to animal welfare issues. The PRC is responsible for coordinating the drafting of new policy documents referred by the Board, and for the review of existing policy documents. The composition of the PRC will be determined by The Board as a component of its governance framework and will be supported by the relevant staff of RSPCA Australia
- 6.2 The PRC will seek information or advice from all relevant sources to inform discussion on an issue under its consideration. External consultation on policy issues should ideally be sought at an early stage in policy development.
- 6.3 The PRC will report on the progress of all policy documents under review to each Board meeting. The PRC may also take this opportunity to seek advice or direction from the Board where the need arises, such as where there is difficulty reaching consensus or where clarification of the intent of a policy proposal is required.
- 6.4 The PRC will only make final recommendations to the Board once the review process has been completed and general agreement on wording has been reached.

7 Specific working groups

- 7.1 The Board may convene specific working groups to coordinate the drafting or review of non-animal welfare policy documents referred by the Board. The composition of Working Groups will be determined by The Board as a component of its governance framework and will be supported by the relevant staff of RSPCA Australia
- 7.2 Working groups will report on their progress to each Board meeting. A working group may also take this opportunity to seek advice or direction from the Board where the need arises, such as where there is difficulty reaching consensus or where clarification of the intent of a policy proposal is required.
- 7.3 A working group will only make final recommendations to the Board once the review process has been completed and general agreement on wording has been reached.

8 Approval process

- 8.1 Final approval of all RSPCA policy statements and position papers is the responsibility of the Board.
- 8.2 Once the PRC or specific working group has reached agreement on a new or amended policy document, the following steps apply:
- **Step 1:** The policy document is forwarded to the Board for approval (acceptance in principle). This is done by tabling it at the next Board meeting. The document remains open for feedback for a minimum of 40 days after tabling. This period may be extended at the request of a member Society.

- **Step 2:** If there is unanimous support for the document (ie there is no feedback requiring discussion or change), it is automatically adopted after 40 days. If there is any feedback requiring discussion or change, the document is amended as required and is resubmitted for adoption at the next Board meeting.