

# The Animal Care Expert

“Animal welfare by the experts—those who keep, care for and breed animals”



Animal Care Australia

## ***In this issue:***

- ACA Yearly Report
- Animal Species' Updates
- *Plus lots more.*



## General Meetings

*Held bi-monthly*

Our next General Meeting is Monday November 11th, 7.30pm.

Held in the Upstairs Lounge at the Commercial Hotel Parramatta—2 Hassall St Parramatta.

**General Enquiries:**

[aca@animalcareaustralia.org.au](mailto:aca@animalcareaustralia.org.au)



# Yearly Report

Animal Care Australia has certainly had an intense first year. Founded amidst what is now referred to as “the pet shop code saga” we discovered many animal groups were struggling to comprehend how the proposals recommended by the Department of Primary Industry (DPI) could ever have become a reality. Yet, that is what almost happened. Documentation lodged with the Ministers office was just days from being signed and brought in as new specifications and requirements within the Prevention Of Cruelty to Animals Act. (POCTA).

It is true to say Animal Care Australia (ACA) would not have been founded had it not been for those proposals being made known to the animal keeping and wider communities.

The objectives of ACA are to represent Animal Care Groups, along with private keepers & hobbyists as the peak animal welfare body, and we are off to a good start. We have hosted the Chief Animal Welfare Officer—Kim Filmer, from the DPI and the Chief Executive Officer of RSPCA NSW—Steve Coleman. Both organisations have recognised ACA as being the first point of contact on animal welfare matters, and of particular importance ACA will be consulted and included in discussions surrounding any future POCTA review.

Our individual species Delegates have been busy engaging with Government on all levels of animal welfare issues. As a collective we have responded to:

- the Inquiry into a National Horse Register
- the desperate need to secure a vaccine for HDV2 virus, which is affecting our pet rabbit community
- the reduction in permitted numbers of pets that can be kept within the Georges River Council precincts , and
- native licensing issues, in NSW and Western Australia

Through our Facebook page and social media presence ACA has commenced clarifying the difference between animal rights and animal welfare. It was very clear following our guest speaker Emma Hurst’s (Animal Justice Party) visit that the AJP has many objectives which are contrary to ACA.

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Our strategy utilising a media release and postings on social media to highlight those differences and bring to the forefront the Animal Justice Party's real agenda was met with positive responses from our followers and several attempts to challenge our views by AJP supporters.

Promoting higher animal welfare outcomes will most certainly be a primary objective for the coming year. ACA will be adopting its own Organisational Code of Ethics which will commence that process. We will engage the DPI and continue to develop individual species Codes of Practice for keeping and breeding of all species we represent. These will be extremely important once the POCTA Review is re-commenced.

In doing so, we will continue to support you — the grass roots hobbyists, keepers and breeders — ensuring standards and guidelines that are impractical, overly cumbersome, and unachievable do not make their way into future legislation.

In addition to fine-tuning Codes of Practice, we will commence developing strategies to help educate the public in the best care for all animals.

We know the health and well-being of the animals in your care is of paramount importance to you. We know that you are the primary care-provider for your animals. You understand their signs of when they are un-well, when they are agitated, nervous, and overly-excited. This makes you an expert. Currently your voice is being drowned out by those with other agendas. These agendas that could quickly lead to the decline of pets and companion animals owned by every day people. This would have a significant impact on a generation of people who would lose the opportunity to share their lives with companion animals such as dogs, cats, rabbits, bearded dragons, budgies, ponies or guinea pigs or collect eggs from their own chicken coop. What kind of a society will that be?

ACA has been established to ensure that your voice matters. That you are heard.



## Animal Care Australia Committee

### Office Bearers 2019 -2020

- **President:** Michael Donnelly
- **Vice President:** Sam Davis
- **Secretary:** Michelle Grayson
- **Treasurer:** Sue Kowalczyk
- **Public Officer:** Sue Kowalczyk

### Committee 2019 -2020

- **Birds:** Sam Davis
- **Cats:** Helen Toovey
- **Farm Animals:** Noeline Cassettari
- **Horses:** Karri Nadazdy
- **Native Mammals:** Michael Donnelly
- **Reptiles:** *Awaiting Committee approval*
- **Small Mammals:** Rachel Sydenham
- **Veterinary:** Dr Michelle Dalli Bsc BVsc (Hons)

## LOOKING FORWARD

Animal Care Australia has a lot to achieve in the coming year. The likelihood of the POCTA Review commencing is just one item on our checklist.

In NSW, since getting their second Member, Emma Hurst, elected in March, The Animal Justice Party has already successfully lobbied for an Inquiry into Animal Cruelty Laws in NSW & the organisations tasked to oversee and prosecute those laws. In addition they are seeking an Inquiry into Exhibited Animals—claiming the focus will be circus & marine park attractions— but just the first step into all animal exhibitions, such as agricultural shows, dog shows and more. By Emma's own admission she recently visited the new Sydney Zoo to investigate the animal welfare conditions and will be pursuing that further.

ACA intends to respond to both Inquiries. But first, we have respond to the following:

- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Draft 2019 - (in Victoria)
- Draft Research into Animal Re-homing Guidelines 2019 (in NSW)

A lot to do. A lot to achieve.

# Social Media Report

As at the 30th August the Animal Care Australia Facebook page has 1024 followers.

Posts have included information on welfare concerns, Council de-sexing programs, animal welfare vs animal rights articles, general pet care articles and articles directed at our followers during recent elections.



## Animals in Circuses

By Noeline Cassettari

Many circuses with animals include circus acts with farm animals. For this reason I have chosen to look at the animal rights vs animal welfare argument for animals in circuses, using Stardust Circus as an example.

The Animal Justice Party website states the Stardust Circus is unethical: <https://nsw.animaljusticeparty.org/what-a-circus/>

The tag of 'unethical' is applied because of concerns the lions are 'confined to cages in between training and performing regimes' And secondly, because the lions are 'made to perform unnatural behaviours'

A good way to decide for yourself is to go and see the Stardust Circus. The living quarters can very easily be seen without paying entry money. The circus pigs surely, have the best life of any pigs in the world?

Anyone interested in animal training will be in awe of the performances given by Stardust's lions,



dogs, monkeys, pigs and goats. It is very evident animals aren't 'forced' to perform behaviours, as on occasions, they don't. It is very evident food rewards are given for behaviours performed. Animal trainer Matt remains in the ring with all the lions as they play. He definitely makes them look just like big cats, as they snuggle up to him.

Mark Pearson, AJP, believes training any animal, including dogs, is 'cruel'. Fortunately for humans and animals, the science of learning has progressed a lot in the last 20 years. Just as school children are no longer hit with a ruler or cane, most animal owners and trainers, understand the effectiveness of positive reinforcement training, and use positive reinforcement to encourage behaviour. Stardust is a wonderful example of what can be achieved with positive reinforcement training.

RSPCA UK commissioned a study into the life of circus animals: [http://the-shg.org/Kiley\\_Worthington/](http://the-shg.org/Kiley_Worthington/) As the results showed circus life was beneficial to their welfare, the results were never published. More information about the welfare of Stardust's animals can be found here: <https://stardustcircus.com.au/animal-welfare/>

When deciding if a circus is unethical, be aware that animal welfare and animal rights are different. Find out about the welfare of the animals. Then make an informed decision for yourself, on whether you think the animals have the right to be there.

*Photo of Noeline with lions under the supervision of trainer Matt. Information about the lions and their training can be found here: <https://stardustcircus.com.au/lions/> Information about the farm animals and how they are trained can be found here: <https://stardustcircus.com.au/domestic-animals/>*

# A year of reptile licensing moving no where!

By Michael Donnelly

Since becoming the Reptile Representative last year quite a number of States have been undergoing licensing reviews by their respective Environment Departments.

As with most bureaucracies these processes have been drawn out with government representatives either ill-informed or completely out-of-touch with what is happening around them.

You really do need to question how some of those involved can lead reviews into the licensing of species that they've mostly never heard of — let alone seen or kept themselves as private licensed keepers or hobbyists.

New South Wales and Western Australia are currently waiting while governments in their States have placed their reviews in limbo.

In the NSW State Election we saw the re-instatement of the same Government but the Environment Department was merged with two other departments — creating a much larger Executive along with new Ministers and yes you guessed it — the review and its proposals is sitting somewhere waiting for someone to decide if the new Minister should or should not see it in its current form. An underlying force behind this delay is the recent election of another Animal Justice Party member. Bringing the number in NSW to two Members — who are currently working overtime to call in to question many aspects of pet keeping and animal welfare — but that's a different article for another day. The point though — their presence raises concerns over whether a review recommending some species including a number of reptiles moving away from requiring a license to a simplified reporting/recording system would cause too much backlash. It doesn't matter if

most of these species are also exempt from licensing in other States — they cannot afford to upset anyone, so until that decision is made we are in limbo!

Western Australia is experiencing things a little differently. After months of calling for community groups to participate in their Community Consultation Panels — they have decided to stop communicating completely. Depending who you talk to, the reasoning is either — “we don't have the funding to carry this out any further” or “there has been some question as to how much influence certain parties involved have so we're looking into how to remedy that”. Regardless it's a matter of limbo in WA.

Queensland's review has certainly been entertaining — NOT — they have gone from having a licensing system that in essence required almost all keepers to purchase and behave as a commercial entity — costing the backyard hobbyists hundreds of dollars every couple of years, to what now appears to be a satisfactory licensing fee structure, but a not so satisfactory reptile species list. Again despite other States having exempt species, no such progress was made in Qld. The lists and license classes that has been released and to be introduced has left many reptile keepers scratching their heads as to the criteria for how such species appear under different categories. It is amazing how governments are hell-bent on creating such lists — whitelists — effectively creating more bureaucracy, whilst complaining they are over-worked, calling for simplification of their own system and yet totally ignoring the obvious — less whitelists, less paperwork, less bureaucracy which equals improved customer service, resulting in higher compliance. *(Continued over page...)*





In Queensland these whitelists are written into legislation. Good idea right? Wrong! Every time a species requires adjusting on these lists, a full legislative update is needed. When you then consider taxonomy is in a constant state of flux — you would think they would have learned not to make the processes so difficult by now?

Meanwhile in South Australia — the lucky state — they actually have a government that took a different approach. They have just added 40 more species to their exempt list — bringing that to a total of 98 species that can be kept without a license in SA. Their thinking — making more species available actually deters the need to take from the wild. Species on tight licensing restrictions and those not permitted at all incur very high price tags, inviting people to smuggle and take from the wild. Money speaks.

I guess we will wait and see which approach works out for which State.

In the meantime for those, who are mostly volunteers, who participate in the consultations, who fight for changes to be made and who receive little or no reward or thanks for the hundreds of hours they invest, that limbo just progresses into a ‘holding pattern’ of frustration.

Certainly more needs to be done. People need to stand up and be counted. People need to be educated. There is simply too much rhetoric influencing the decision makers. Opponents of animals being kept as pets and companions are gaining ground faster than we can keep up. But we need to keep up — in fact — we need to get ahead of them! We will continue to slog on and try to ensure our future generations can keep reptiles and amphibians as pets.



## Small Mammals Update

*By R.D. Sydenham*

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome members from our small mammal organisations and to thank you for helping to support ACA in our mission to represent you in matters of government issues regarding the keeping of animals and their welfare.

In current news — in July our Small Mammal Representative was approached by a member organisation in regards to the Georges River Council proposal of the ENV011- Draft- Keeping Animals Policy. This policy outlined new council legislation that would put in place restrictions on the number of animals allowed to be kept by a single house-hold. The numbers outlined in the draft policy are not realistic and will inevitably make it very difficult for hobbyists residing in the area to be able to keep and breed caviies, rabbits, rodents and ferrets.

After, consultation with the ACA committee, it was decided that a submission would be put forward to Georges River Council outlining why the draft policy is not beneficial for the animal hobbyist communities. The submission included a request for the Georges River Council to meet with the Small Mammals Representative to discuss better solutions to the policy that would benefit all parties, animal hobbyists and the Georges River Council.

The closing date for submissions was Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019. Our submission was sent 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019, and received with confirmation by Georges River Council 30<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

Link to Georges River Draft- Keeping Animals Policy:

<https://yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/public-exhibition-draft-keeping-of-animals-policy>

Link to ACA Submission:

<https://www.animalcareaustralia.org.au/submissions/aca-georges-river-council-submission/>

# Choosing a cat.

By Helen Toovey

For many years dog owners have decided on their chosen breed and then sought out a breeder to purchase from. The reason people chose a particular breed is based on many reasons such as leisure time, yard size, number and ages of family members. They then look for the breed that matched those characteristics and therefore may suit their lifestyle best.

More and more people are now turning to make a conscious choice on purchasing a cat. People choose their breed to fit into their homes, lifestyles and hearts. Same as the canine choices that have been made for many years people are now choosing a cat breed that will suit the size of their home, the amount of time they have for care (such as grooming) and of course the number and ages of their family members.

Cat breeds – like dog breeds – are all different. Some have a remote personality and are very independent. Some like to be best friends with just one person. Some like to be a part of all you do – you opened a cupboard ‘need some help with that??’. Some like to be all over you and right ‘in your face’!

Breeders specialise in the breeds they choose to breed. After choosing a breed that may suit your family the next step is to find a breeder that you are comfortable with. One that can advise you of the care required as well as any characteristics that your kitten and then your adult cats may have.

The Breeder you choose should help you to thoroughly enjoy every part of the experience of a purchasing your new family member and wish you well for many years of cat love!



## Important: Changes to the rules from July 1st.

### *Selling or giving away a cat or dog!*

*The Department of Primary Industries has introduced changes for selling cats, dogs, puppies & kittens.*

*Please make yourself aware of these changes.*

*Go to the DPI website for more information:*

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/animal-welfare/companion-animal-welfare/selling-or-giving-away-a-cat-or-dog>



# Horse update

By Karri Nadazdy

The National Horse Register Inquiry is under way with a new committee to take over the review process. The first public hearing was held on Sept 4 in Sydney, and a second was held on Sept 20 in Canberra. Recommendations from the Committee are expected to be announced in December 2019. This could be a significant turning point for all horse owners and the industry as a whole, and we hope it leads to positive changes for the horses in our community by being introduced alongside appropriate legislation.

Equestrian Australia (EA) quietly released a rule change to their eventing cross country rules in April, 2019 to ban the use of bitless bridles. This was in response to a serious accident that occurred last year at an EA event where a bridle broke and a rider was seriously injured. EA took the stance that a bitted bridle could never break and result in such an accident, and as a result banned the use of bitless bridles. The International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI) have now proposed the same rule change internationally. Despite 3 incidences of bitted bridles breaking in competition occurring at FEI events just this year (and no bitless bridles involved), no action or recommendations has been made regarding bitted bridles to educate competitors on how to stay in control of their horses in the event of a gear failure or a panicked horse. Stronger and more severe tack is being recommended instead of better education of riders and horses.

Bitless Inc, an ACA member organisation, contacted EA offering education and assistance on bitless bridles for the EA Eventing Committee to review the rule. No response has yet been received. At the same time World Bitless

Association has been raising awareness of the proposed changes and the welfare implications of such a rule change.

RSPCA Australia released a statement supporting the use of bitless bridles in competition, but has not contacted EA or FEI directly. The British Equestrian Federation and British Eventing have released the following statement: "The British response to the proposal is that we support hackamore/bitless bridles and we are not aware of any evidence or reason to suggest that hackamores/bitless bridles should not be used. GBR NF feels that a rule change is not necessary and will not be applying any such change to NF competition rules."

ACA supports better training over harsher tools, to ensure rider safety and higher welfare for horses. Members of EA or FEI affiliates are encouraged to contact EA and comment on the rule change.

In other news - with the drought continuing in Australia, and long term rain forecasts predicting a very dry Spring, hay is likely to be even more expensive and unattainable this summer. This is a serious welfare issue for all horse owners as hay supplies are likely to run out before the end of the year. Horses require constant access to roughage, unlike most animals, horses can only produce saliva to dilute stomach acid while actually eating. Empty stomachs can lead to ulcers and horses eating poisonous plants and inedible objects like wood and sand in an attempt to dilute the acid build up and the pain it causes. Horse owners need to preserve what pasture grazing they can, and purchase extra hay this spring to ensure they are not caught out in summer if the drought continues the way it has.



# ACA Bird Report—2019

By Sam Davis

## ACT Licensing Issue

Bruce Goleby (President Canberra Finch Club), Simon Degenhard and I met with the ACT Conservator's office on Thursday afternoon 5/9/2019 to present the following submission...

<https://www.ccbfa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ccbfa-act-exempt-020919.pdf>

The meeting couldn't have been more successful. There was immediate agreement that in general all exotics that are at all likely to be present in ACT aviculture should be returned or added to the exempt list, and similarly, in general, for any natives that are (or will be) exempt in NSW. Many thanks to all who assisted.

## Native Parrot Exports for Display – Australian Government Meeting

Productive meeting about native bird exports in Canberra on 5/9/2019. A summary of the meeting will be released in due course. The following CCBFA statement relevant to this matter was unanimously passed at our latest CCBFA meeting and is the general view expressed by me (CCBFA President, Sam Davis) during the meeting and on behalf of approximately 250 CCBFA affiliated clubs.

*"CCBFA supports and encourages a simplified export system for birds known to be aviary bred. Essentially captive bred birds, whether native or exotic, should be treated in the same manner as dogs, cats, and other routinely exported (and imported) species (except for threatened species within captive breeding programs). This is THE way to deter smuggling, as there is not and will not ever be sufficient sustainable funding to enforce border controls. The only proviso is to include safeguards to ensure captive numbers within Australia for each exported species remain sustainable."*

## NSW Native Animal Licensing Update.

We are still awaiting approval of the reforms package by Matt Kean, Minister for Energy and Environment. There remains some concern the reform package has stalled due to perceived Animal Justice Party concerns – not confirmed. Everything is ready for implementation.

## Western Australia - formation of Aviculture Consultative Committee

We received a further reply from Minister Stephen Dawson this week to confirm his commitment to the formation of the Aviculture Consultative Committee. Unfortunately our concerns are not being progressed by WA Wildlife Protection Branch, however the Minister has indicated this



should be able to occur prior to the formal formation of the Aviculture Consultative Committee – we will see.

## Queensland – new licencing package with Minister

The Queensland licensing reform package, which includes significant additions to both their exempt and licensed species lists, is now awaiting approval by the Minister. Current expectations are that the new system will commence April 2020.

## Black-throated Finch (BTF) and Orange-bellied Parrot (OBP) recovery effort

A range of national and international scientists, together with stakeholders from aviculture met at Macquarie University on 16/8/19 to discuss both BTF and OBP recovery ideas. The expertise and experience present in the meeting was astounding, including representatives from significant NGOs and those with access to approve project funding. We all brainstormed ideas, discussed options and possibilities. A general consensus on a project was achieved and is very exciting. Essentially, we hope to use both the BTF (passerine) and OBP (psittacine) as a pilot for a larger project to preserve genetic material for threatened avian species more generally. Really exciting stuff – amazing science, amazing possibilities for aviculture to get involved - watch this space!

*(cont'd over page ....)*



**Animal Care Australia (ACA) and Animal Justice Party (AJP) Update.**

It's hard to believe ACA has been operating for just 12 months. There have been a few internal administrative issues to resolve as one would expect with any new organisation, especially one that represents such a diverse range of animal care clubs and groups. We already have a presence with a number of government officials and politicians which is a terrific start and we are certainly known to the AJP.

There is much work to be done by ACA. In NSW there are a range of parliamentary inquiries instigated by the AJP that affect aviculture and require ACA input together with similar welfare matters arising in Victoria. If your club is aware of emerging issues in your state please let me know – best via email to [president@ccbfa.org.au](mailto:president@ccbfa.org.au)

We encourage all bird clubs to join ACA at their earliest convenience. Membership forms can be downloaded from <http://animalcareaustralia.org.au/files/aca-membership-application.pdf> and my letter date 20/10/2018 regarding ACA can be found under the submissions tab on the [www.ccbfa.org.au](http://www.ccbfa.org.au) website.

## ***Animal Groups wanted and Committee Positions available:***

Are you a member of registered pet groups—particularly dog and fish groups—we would love to have you join us.

We are seeking dog and fish animal groups to join us and from within those we are looking to include representatives on our Committee.

Come and join our team and give your voice on behalf of the community that you participate in.

New groups can join us by completing the Membership Form—either online or downloading the form from the [JOIN](#) page of our website.

If you would like to join the Committee please send a CV and Expression of Interest to our Secretary at:

[secretary@animalcareaustralia.org.au](mailto:secretary@animalcareaustralia.org.au)





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Watch out for our next  
issue in December  
2019.

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