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**MEDIA RELEASE****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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VICTORIA TO GRANT RSPCA INSPECTORS MORE POWERS THAN POLICE

Peak Animal Welfare organisation Animal Care Australia has raised significant concerns regarding Victoria's draft Animal Care & Protection Bill, which is currently in its final stage of review.

The draft Animal Care & Protection Bill will replace the current *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (the POCTA Act).

Animal Care Australia has expressed deep concerns over the unwarranted expansion of powers granted to Authorised Officers. Authorised Officers, as defined by the Bill, included but may not be limited to, RSPCA inspectors and some Council officers as well as Victorian Police Officers.

Animal Care Australia strongly opposes the appointment of authorised officers under the Bill who are acting in the same, if not greater, capacity as Police. The Bill gives RSPCA and Council Officers the right of entry without consent or a warrant to look for any evidence of an offence – they do not need to have any suspicions or reports of an offence having been committed.

"Police and Councils have certain levels of accountability for their Officers' actions and behaviour at work, without indemnity if they break the law while carrying out their duties" said Michael Donnelly, President of Animal Care Australia. "This Bill enhances the ability of the RSPCA to abuse its powers, as it has no such oversight or accountability. More concerning is that all authorised officers have been indemnified from legal repercussions while enforcing this legislation. This is completely unacceptable."

Animal Care Australia also opposes Section 236: 'Requirement to give information to authorised officer during entry'. "The bill's blatant disregard of a person's right to be silent is appalling" said Mr Donnelly, "While there is a clause which provides for a person to remain silent so as not to incriminate themselves, most people will not be advised of this right or even worse not realise they are in fact incriminating themselves until it is too late."

"It is unthinkable that charitable organisations should be granted more power to interrogate people than the Police have."

"For far too long the RSPCA has been stepping outside of the acceptable boundaries other law enforcement agencies are bound by with state governments too afraid to reign them in. Here we see the Allan Government actively encouraging the RSPCA instead of making them work *with* Police."

Complicating matters further, The majority of the Regulations referred to in the draft bill do not yet exist, making it even more difficult for welfare organisations to consult on the appropriateness of the draft bill for Victorian animal owners.

Animal Care Australia also highlighted other anomalies in the bill, including the term 'animal welfare' being replaced by animal rights jargon; the requirement of a license to hold any event, activity or exhibition involving animals; and undeveloped foetus and eggs being included in the definition of 'animal' and subject to animal cruelty investigations.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please call Michael Donnelly on 0400 323 843 or email president@animalcareaustralia.org.au

"Animal Welfare by the experts – those who keep, care for and breed animals"

About Animal Care Australia

Animal Care Australia (ACA) is a national incorporated association established to advocate for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to establish an organisation run solely by volunteers. With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

By uniting the broad spectrum of animal groups, collectively we offer an experienced, sensible approach to animal welfare. Our foundation clubs are representative of the 70% of the population that own pets across the nation.

By educating our members and the general public about the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect for their needs, and promoting the humane treatment of animals to improve animal welfare outcomes. Animal Care Australia is in the unique position of collaborating, consulting and advocating for all animals within our care.

Animal Care Australia provides priority to the following:

- consulting with government for stronger welfare outcomes
- encouraging government to increase education of the public in animal welfare and best care techniques
- educating the public on handling their animals with kindness & respect and the importance of their needs
- educating the public in the differences between animal welfare and animal rights

Photo: ACA President, Michael Donnelly

