

PRESS RELEASE - FORESHADOWED CHANGES TO ACT ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

The foreshadowed changes to the Animal Welfare Act ('Lawmakers to get tough on animals' behalf', Canberra Times 10 March) are welcome - and only a quarter of a century overdue, according to CAP spokesperson, Robyn Soxsmith.

However, CAP is astonished at the hypocrisy of the ACT government for publicising a few trivial reforms for companion animals while still allowing shooters to massacre more than 25,000* kangaroos a year across the ACT. (*figure taken from the ACT Conservator of Fauna and Flora and includes the 5,000 cull licence.)

Robyn Soxsmith observes, "If the ACT Government were serious about getting 'tough on animals' behalf', it would put an immediate and permanent end to the government's annual kangaroo slaughter which has been shown, again and again, to lack any scientific foundation." in ACAT hearings.

Ms Soxsmith says that Megan Fitzharris is quite right in saying that the Animal Welfare Act has created barriers to effective enforcement.

"The main barrier is Section 20 of the Act which completely exempts from prosecution under the Act any act of cruelty which complies with a Code of Practice. Some of these Codes are written by the ACT's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, but others are written by industries that exploit animals and are obviously not remotely interested in the welfare of the animals."

Ms Soxsmith cites two key examples of this: the Code for commercial poultry and the Code for shooting kangaroos.

"We saw it with the battery hens twenty years ago when the RSPCA felt unable to prosecute the keepers of featherless, featherweight birds left to starve and die of disease in their own manure.

"We see it now, every year, in the government's annual extermination campaign against kangaroos, which shatters family groups, orphans young at foot and allows pouch young to be bashed to death or decapitated.

"And if that wasn't enough, we have the 2012 burial pit for the government's slaughtered kangaroos where a young kangaroo was discovered by anti-cull protestors to have been shot, bludgeoned, stabbed, and then died of blood loss or suffocation. The government did absolutely nothing to make sure that never happened again – they just started hiding their burial pits more carefully."

CAP is awaiting announcement of this year's government slaughter, and will be out in force to expose this obscene and disgusting cruelty by a government of hypocrites.

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