



RSPCA's identity crisis

By
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THE RSPCA has again been called on by farm lobby groups and Liberal MLCs Nigel Hallett and Brian Ellis, to identify what the organisation actually stands for.

The calls from Mr Hallett and Mr Ellis comes after Federal MHR Barry Haase, Durack, last month accused the RSPCA of becoming an animal liberation group rather than an animal welfare group.

The RSPCA has come under major criticism from the rural sector following Australia's live cattle export ban to Indonesia with perceptions it had joined forces with Animals Australia and GetUp rather than offering assistance to industry.

Farm Weekly first reported RSPCA's confusing stance on July 7 when Pastoralists and Graziers Association president Rob Gillam asked RSPCA national president Lynne Bradshaw to identify where the organisation stood on the live cattle export issue.

Then on July 21 *Farm Weekly* reported the RSPCA adding links, 'Teacher's Guide to Live Export', on the World of Animal Welfare website, encouraging children to write to the Prime Minister to ban live export for good.

Ms Bradshaw has continually told *Farm Weekly* the RSPCA is not against farming or farmers and wants to work with farmers to produce a better outcome for animals.

But at the same time it has continued its call for a total ban on live export.

The situation is back on the radar after Ms Bradshaw spoke at the Ban Live Export rally in Fremantle on Sunday, along with Greens MP Lynn



BRETT Hutchinson, Beverley said he wasn't anti-RSPCA but said sometimes organisations get a little bit 'power-happy' and go over board.

"People just try their best but what works in theory may not work in practice," Mr Hutchinson said.

"We don't like to see animals cruelly treated but with the weather and that sort of thing people went through a tough time with their sheep and it broke people's hearts."

Mr Hutchinson said he was

disappointed to hear of RSPCA's affiliation with Animals Australia and GetUp.

"That is not where they should be going," he said.

"I mean you pay your fees for them to do a particular job and then they go off their charter and do something else.

"If they are going in line with these liberationists then yes they have gone off their charter and they need to bring it back."

He said it would be hard for farmers to work with the

RSPCA if its main aim was to ban live export.

"Some of those ships treat the animals better than the way some people run their sheep or cattle on farms," he said.

"As for the abattoirs, as we know, some of it was taken out of context and I am sure some of them were doing the wrong thing but don't crucify the whole industry for it.

"Live export cannot be banned. It can't happen.

"You saw what happened to the poor blokes up north."

MacLaren and Animals Australia investigator Lyn White (via recording).

Mr Hallett raised the issue in the Senate last week saying the RSPCA was created for the purpose of looking after domestic pets and not for becoming involved with political lobby groups.

The RSPCA receives \$500,000 a year in funding from the State Government which Mr Hallett also questioned.

"Basically what I questioned was the RSPCA's right to be part

of the political lobby group at the rally," Mr Hallett said.

"Animal cruelty is what the RSPCA is aligned with and what they have done well but now they are taking on animal liberation with Animals Australia.

"If they are going to do that then they should not be taking taxpayer funding which the State Government has given them."

Mr Hallett said the RSPCA needed to either become a political lobby group and receive no government funding or do

what it was designed to do and look after domestic animal welfare.

"For Ms Bradshaw to be part of an advertisement showing her as a key speaker at the rally showed exactly where the organisation sits," he said.

"Are they just another lobby group like PETA and Animals Australia?"

"Where do they actually stand?"

Mr Hallett said he would like

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to see the RSPCA offer a helping hand and get involved with industry rather than aligning themselves with animal activists.

Mr Ellis was also in the Senate when Mr Hallett raised the issue and threw his full support behind the call for the RSPCA to identify itself.

"I can understand why Mr Hallett made those comments," Mr Ellis said.

"The banning of the live cattle trade had serious repercussions which those who promoted the ban never ever thought about and I don't think they ever really cared about the repercussions."

Mr Ellis said he had known the RSPCA was opposed to live export and accepted that but wanted the RSPCA to work with industry.

"What worries me is an organisation like the RSPCA, which has a lot of credibility and receives taxpayer funds, is now lobbying and joining forces with

radical organisations that have no credibility," he said.

"The RSPCA does a lot of good but we expect more from highly regarded organisations and for them to work with industry rather than joining protests and working against the industry."

Mr Ellis said he had no problem with Ms Bradshaw speaking at the Ban Live Export rally last Sunday but hoped she would give both sides of the story.

"If they are just going to stand on the outside and throw rocks at the industry then of course people are going to be upset," he said.

"People will say why is the RSPCA taxpayer-funded when they are not doing what they are expected to be doing?"

Ms Bradshaw issued a statement last week saying Mr Hallett's comments were misguided and defended her decision to participate in the rally.

"The RSPCA raises more



Part of the small crowd at the Ban Live Export Rally held last Sunday in Fremantle.

than 90 per cent of its operating costs itself," Ms Bradshaw said.

"The money received from the State Government is welcomed in the fight against animal cruelty.

"The RSPCA is an independent organisation and will always speak out when it sees incidents of animal cruelty."

Ms Bradshaw said Mr Hallett needed to rethink his argument if he believed the footage shown

on the Four Corners program and the subsequent action taken in regards to the Indonesian abattoirs, was not about animal welfare.

"The RSPCA's aim is not to target individual organisations or businesses but to improve the welfare of animals in situations where they're clearly being mistreated, such as those highlighted in places like Indonesia and Kuwait," she said.