



Animal Defenders  
Office

Using the law to protect animals

Issue 3 | 2017

December

# ADO Newsletter

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Lawyers Weekly

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former RSPCA inspector  
Catherine Croatto



*The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity.*

- George Bernard Shaw

## ACT Ban on Greyhound Racing

A ban on greyhound racing is now law in the ACT, with amendments to the Racing Act and the Domestic Animals Act passing the ACT Legislative Assembly on 28 November 2017. The ban will take effect on 30 April 2018. The Minister responsible for animal welfare,

Meegan Fitzharris MLA, said during the parliamentary debate on the amendments: 'The welfare of greyhounds is at the centre of these important reforms. It is 25 years since the Territory banned wild-animal circuses. We are now set to be the first to follow through

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Remember to grab some of our fundraising vegan wine through social enterprise **Goodwill Wine** - great for Xmas, the New Year, or Australia Day!



<http://www.goodwillwine.com.au/charities/animal-defenders-office>



with a ban on greyhound racing...and we won't be the last.' The ADO has lobbied for a ban on greyhound racing by speaking with ACT politicians including Caroline Le Couteur, MLA (ACT Greens) and Meegan Fitzharris, MLA (ACT Labor). During the 2016 ACT election, we also created a political 'scorecard' that rated

parties on their levels of support for a ban on greyhound racing, as a guide to voters on where parties stood on important animal protection issues.

The ADO congratulates the ACT Government and everyone who has fought for justice for the animals in this industry in the ACT.



PARTIES (in alphabetical order)	Supports a ban on greyhound racing in the ACT	Supports strengthening animal cruelty and neglect penalties	Supports suspension of killing kangaroos on ACT public land	Supports acknowledging animals' sentience in ACT legislation
Animal Justice Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian Labor Party (ACT Branch)	TBC*	✓	✓	No policy
Australian Sex Party ACT	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liberal Democratic Party	✗	✗	No policy	No policy
Liberal Party of Australia (ACT Division)	✗	No policy	No policy	No policy
Like Canberra	✗	No policy	No policy	No policy
Sustainable Australia (ACT)	No policy	✓	✓	No policy
The ACT Greens	✓	✓	✗	✓
The Community Alliance Party (ACT)	✓	✓	✓	✓

## ADO features in Lawyers Weekly

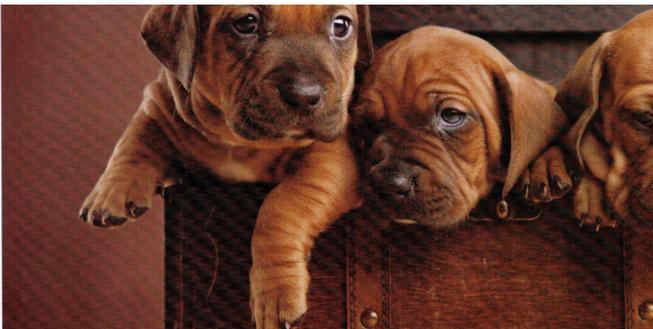
The ADO featured in a major article in the November 2017 print issue of *Lawyers Weekly* along with other animal-focused legal organisations including Lawyers for Animals and The Animal Law Institute. It was great to see the work of these animal lawyers featured in such an influential legal journal. It is also encouraging to see the field of animal law being recognised in this way, as it is a sign of its move into the legal mainstream.

## Dangerous Dog Laws

On 1 November 2017 the opposition Liberal Party introduced a private members bill to amend ACT laws regulating dangerous dogs. We have several concerns about the amendments, including:

- Compulsory killing of dogs declared dangerous after a serious attack. Currently owners are given the chance to apply for a dangerous dog licence to keep the dog in secure conditions.
- Indefinite impoundment of dogs being investigated for alleged involvement in an attack. Currently dogs must be released after 28 days if a decision about the dog or the incident has not been made. This ensures dogs are not kept in extremely confined and sterile conditions for long periods of time.
- A dramatically increased dangerous dog licence fee (by almost 400%), putting it out of reach of people on lower incomes.

The Government made a large number of amendments to the bill, which was passed on 29 November 2017. A consolidated version of the amendment law was not available at the time this newsletter was printed.



### More than a pet project

Animal lawyers are dedicated to animal rights protection and advocacy, often with little or no financial reward writes Tom Lindauvke

The work is shouldered by not-for-profits and community legal centres, which rely primarily on volunteers and donations. Here, Lawyers Weekly talks to some of these passionate animal rights advocates about what they do and what drives them.

**Passion for justice**  
A range of organisations are involved in animal law, from the national RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)

The ADO provides free legal advice and representation, often for people interested in protecting domestic animals and animals kept by breeders. The centre also acts to protect wildlife and promotes legislative changes to better protect all sorts of animals. However, executive director Tara Ward says the volunteer organisation still struggles with resourcing. 'The big difference between us and all the other community legal centres is that we don't get any government funding.' Ms Ward says

# A Dialogue

## ***Tell us a little about yourself?***

I spent many years in the NSW Police where besides dealing with humans I attended many jobs in relation to animal cruelty. After leaving the police I worked with Assistance Dogs Australia where we trained and placed dogs with people suffering with physical and mental disabilities.

## ***What drew you towards a career working for animals?***

Combining my investigative background with my animal qualifications naturally drew me to a job where I was able to combine both.

## ***What was your role in the RSPCA? What did your role involve?***

I was the Senior Inspector at RSPCA ACT where I was responsible for the investigation of animal cruelty complaints. This involved seizing neglected animals, interviewing those responsible, prosecuting the serious cases and providing education.

## ***What were the highlights of working for the RSPCA?***

I am most proud of having the highest number of animals brought into the shelter via the Inspectorate in RSPCA ACT history, as well as having the highest prosecution rate ever achieved. It was also very rewarding persevering with enquiries which enabled us to locate the sheep that unfortunately became 'famous' for his overgrown fleece. Many of the staff were disheartened that media attention was focused on how much his fleece weighed rather



Catherine receiving her award from ADO Director, Yana del Valle

than the fact an animal had suffered. I was also proud of the fact that after drawing attention to deficiencies in the Animal Welfare Act I was instrumental in having changes made. The main highlight, however, was working with the dedicated staff who were tireless in their efforts to provide the necessary vet care, daily needs and love that animals require.

## ***What are the most challenging aspects of working for animals and improving their welfare?***

The connection or relationship between animals and their owners can be extremely strong, so dealing with incidences of unintentional neglect can be very, very difficult. Convincing people that the animal would be better off with another family can be challenging.

## ***What for you is the biggest issue in the animal welfare movement in Australia?***

The biggest issue is that unless there is someone continually driving animal welfare, complacency sets in. To improve animal welfare we need legislation that truly supports the

Interview with **Catherine Croatto**, former RSPCA Senior Inspector & recipient of the ADO Animal Protection Award 2017



Catherine and Cheeky. Photo: RSPCA ACT

work of those who have authority to remove animals from deplorable situations. We need a dedicated pool of experienced, professional and compassionate investigators who have an excellent knowledge of legislation and how to implement it and who can respond to complaints in a timely fashion. We can only make change if we have sufficient proof that change is vital.

## ***What are ways that people can bring about change in their community regarding issues of animal welfare?***

Demanding that action is taken needs to be done in a professional and efficient manner. Organisations like the Animal Defenders Office should be enormously proud of their achievements. I would encourage those who care about animal welfare to support such organisations. Never give up and keep fighting for necessary change in animal welfare.

[Editor: On 14 December 2017 the ADO was proud to award Catherine our inaugural 'Animal Protection Award', in recognition of her significant achievements in using the law to protect animals in the ACT.]

# Events

## Living Green Festival

Held on the gloriously sunny 1 October at Albert Hall, Canberra's pet-friendly Living Green Festival was a perfect snippet of the delights of sustainable, cruelty-free living. We had a great time talking to people at our stall, and looking on at the musicians, performers, speakers, rock climbers and four-legged friends who made the day one to remember.



[Sub-editor: Here's our talented editor, Serrin Rutledge-Prior, wowing the crowd with some swing-dancing at the Living Green Festival]

## Cruelty Free Festival NSW

On 22 October the ADO headed to Sydney for the 12th Cruelty Free Festival, which featured a marvellous array of market stalls and cruelty-free food. A big thank you to the volunteers who helped with our stall.



## Whatever Floats Your Horse Festival

25 November saw the ADO set up our last stall for the year at the Whatever Floats Your Horse Festival in Tuggeranong. We talked to lots of new people about animals and the law, and checked out the 'Horse Float of Ideas' – a unique, relocatable, experimental art space for local artists.



## Animal Activists Forum

This past October a herd of animal activists descended upon the stately Melbourne Town Hall for the annual Animal Activists Forum. Highlights included Senator Lee Rhiannon's talk on kangaroos, and a presentation from Chris Delforce on his work uncovering the truth behind the bolted doors of local factory farms. The forum will be held in Adelaide in 2018!

## Upcoming...

Don't miss the new monthly vegan markets in Sydney, on the 3rd Sunday of every month!

The ADO is proud to have assisted Vegan NSW in establishing this wonderful initiative. For more: [www.sydneyveganmarket.com](http://www.sydneyveganmarket.com)

## Cruelty Free Shop's 1st Birthday

Canberra's Cruelty Free Shop celebrated its 1st birthday on 21 November, and we were there to join in the festivities.

