



## Animal Defenders Office

*Using the law to protect animals*

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The Animal Defenders Office Inc. is accredited by the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

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Canberra Times Fun Run

[canberrafunrun@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:canberrafunrun@fairfaxmedia.com.au)

Thursday 14 September 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Concern re petting zoo at this year's Canberra Times Fun Run**

I am writing on behalf of the Animal Defenders Office regarding a matter of concern during this year's Canberra Times Fun Run.

The Animal Defenders Office is a nationally accredited community legal centre based in Canberra.

The Animal Defenders Office as 'Team ADO' has been an enthusiastic participant in the past four Fun Runs. Last year we were the top team in the 5km event, and this year we were the top charity team in both the 5km and 10km events. In 2015 our volunteers assisted race organisers on the day by handing out medals to race entrants. We look forward to continuing our involvement with the Fun Run in years to come.

However, our primary goals as an organisation include advocating for better animal protection through our legal system, and ensuring that existing standards of care are being met. In this regard we wish to provide feedback regarding a matter of animal welfare concern at this year's Fun Run.

We were very disappointed to see that a petting zoo had been included as part of the post-race entertainment at the finish-line area. There are significant animal welfare concerns associated with petting zoos, where very young animals are confined specifically for human-animal interactions. RSPCA Australia states the following about petting zoos:

There are many welfare risks associated with these interactions including distress, injury and even death. Most States do not have mandatory standards to safeguard the welfare of these animals, which in many cases are young and therefore extremely vulnerable.<sup>1</sup>

We would like to draw your attention to some of the welfare concerns:

- No ACT code of practice covering short-term displays of animals such as petting zoos is available, so it is difficult to determine the minimum standards with which these displays must comply.
- The area in which the petting zoo was set up at this year's Fun Run had very little (if any) shade.
- The enclosure had no areas in which the young animals could go for periods of respite (particularly from children who might mishandle them).

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<sup>1</sup> [http://kb.rspca.org.au/What-is-the-RSPCAs-view-on-petting-zoos-and-other-types-of-animal-encounters\\_247.html](http://kb.rspca.org.au/What-is-the-RSPCAs-view-on-petting-zoos-and-other-types-of-animal-encounters_247.html).

- Upon inquiry we learnt that one of the animals was only three weeks old (see Attachment A). This is an extremely young age for a baby animal to be separated from his or her mother, and left to be handled by very young human children. We note that the ACT *Animal Welfare (Mandatory Code of Practice) Approval 2013 (No 1)* (regulating the sale of animals in the ACT) states that young animals such as kittens and puppies should not be removed from their mother prior to eight weeks from birth.<sup>2</sup>
- The distances travelled by young animals used in petting zoos can be considerable.
- The conditions in which the young animals are transported can be cramped and stressful.
- There are also general questions about the origins of the animals being used (Are they being bred for this purpose? Under what conditions are the parent animals living?) and about their fate once they are no longer used in the petting zoo.

We understand that the Canberra Times Fun Run prides itself on being a family-friendly event that promotes healthy lifestyles, wellbeing, and the support of local charities. This is certainly commendable. In our view, what is not commendable is the support of a practice such as petting zoos that puts the wellbeing of often extremely young animals at risk.

We strongly urge the Canberra Times Fun Run to offer family entertainment that does not involve putting young and vulnerable animals at risk of distress or injury.

We look forward to hearing from you about our concerns, and please don't hesitate to contact us about any of the matters raised above.

Warm regards

[Signed]

Tara Ward

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**Tara Ward**

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The Animal Defenders Office acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.

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<sup>2</sup> Clause 3.2.3; <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2013-223/current/pdf/2013-223.pdf>.

**ATTACHMENT A:** 3-week-old baby goat at petting zoo at the 2017 Canberra Times Fun Run

