



## **RSPCA Victoria submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence**

It is well documented that perpetrators of family violence use overt threats and actual harm to animals as a mechanism to attain and maintain control of their family (Roguski 2012, Tiplady et al 2012). Therefore RSPCA Victoria considers that animal welfare should be a key consideration for the Royal Commission. The RSPCA would like to provide the following information and recommendations to this Royal Commission and would be happy to provide additional information as needed.

### **Inspectorate/Authorised Officers**

The RSPCA Inspectorate is often called in to investigate cruelty to animals in homes with family violence. In many cases, animals are abused as a method of controlling partners while in the home, or they may be starved, abused or neglected when the victim flees the home.

The RSPCA often needs to seize animals from these homes. Animals in these situations can be a tool of abuse or collateral damage. It has been found that there are better outcomes for victims when animals in these households are also considered. It is difficult for Inspectors to prosecute for animal cruelty in these situations as often the only witness to cruelty is the victim who is often too scared or is otherwise unable to be a witness in court.

### *Recommendations*

- Compulsory reporting of family violence by all Authorised Officers.
- Training and reporting mechanisms for early intervention.

### **Veterinary Clinics**

Veterinarians are likely to see signs of abuse in animals which are related to family violence. Veterinarians need to be trained to identify this.

### *Recommendations*

- Compulsory reporting of family violence by all Veterinarians.
- Training and reporting mechanisms for early intervention.

### **Animal Shelters**

Currently some animal shelters provide ad hoc welfare boarding for victims fleeing family violence. Funding for welfare boarding is unreliable and often limited. Welfare boarding is only provided by animal shelters when they have the capacity to do so. Local governments should have a responsibility to provide welfare boarding for animals and this should not be a responsibility of charities. A government supported system is required.

### *Recommendations*

- Shelters for victims fleeing family violence could include animal accommodation.
- Local governments should have a system in place for the provision of animal accommodation.
- Funding could be provided for boarding of animals at private boarding establishments.

### **References**

Roguski M (2012) Pets as Pawns: The Co-existence of Animal Cruelty and Family Violence <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/DV-PetsAsPawnsNZ.pdf> URL accessed 21 May 2015



Tiplady CM, Walsh DB, Phillips CJC (2012) Intimate partner violence and companion animal welfare *Australian Veterinary Journal* **90**: 48-53

**Other useful documents/websites**

Municipal Association of Victoria - The role of council animal management:

<http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/pvaw-information-sheets/Pages/12-role-council-animal-management.aspx>

American Humane Association - Understanding The Link Between Animal Abuse and Family Violence: <http://www.americanhumane.org/interaction/support-the-bond/fact-sheets/understanding-the-link.html>

Ascione FR (2007) Emerging research on animal abuse as a risk factor for intimate partner violence. *Intimate partner violence* chapter 3

[http://www.amrric.org/sites/default/files/Intimate\\_Partner\\_Violence\\_Ascione.pdf](http://www.amrric.org/sites/default/files/Intimate_Partner_Violence_Ascione.pdf)