

Submission
No 235

INQUIRY INTO USE OF PRIMATES AND OTHER ANIMALS IN MEDICAL RESEARCH IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: The Cat Protection Society of NSW

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NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No 2 – Health Inquiry into the use of primates and other animals in medical research in New South Wales

The Cat Protection Society of NSW welcomes the Committee's inquiry. Research using animals is frequently cruel, frequently unnecessary, and rarely helpful to humans.

Cat Protection has a long history of opposition to needless experimentation and testing on animals. In our November 1982 journal it was noted that "In the view of the State Council of this Society, testing commercial products on live animals is abhorrent and disgusting. We condemn it and all who take part in it". The Chairman's Report in the December 1985 journal discusses a report that appeared in *The Australian* on 7 November 1985, condemning the use of protected animals, including Tasmanian Devils, in experiments on brain temperatures.

There are many more examples, the most recent of which was a guest article (in our Spring 2020 *Cat Affairs*) by Robyn Kirby for Humane Research Australia (HRA), about the hidden horror of cats in Australian research. A significant observation in this was how little information on research using animals is made publicly available in Australia.

Records available to HRA showed that in NSW, cats have been used in the production of biological products, regulatory product testing, human biology research and animal management studies. In Victoria, they found evidence of horrific invasive experiments in hearing and vision research.

Cat Protection does not claim expertise in human medical research, but we do know that animals are sentient, deserve protection and respect, and to be given the chance to live their best life. They are not disposable; they are not 'tools' to be used repeatedly to demonstrate things that are already known; and to any extent that an animal is ever used in research, that use should be demonstrated as necessary (we agree with the recommendation on page 5 of HRA's submission to this Committee that "Retrospective assessments of animal research to be mandatory as a condition of funding and made public") and ethically justified.

In its position statement on animals in research, Sentient, The Veterinary Institute for Animal Ethics, notes its support of the 'Three R' principles (replacement, reduction, refinement) and makes the point that replacement should be the first goal, and that the "onus must be on researchers to provide proof, via an extensive and referenced literature search, that animals cannot be replaced as research 'subjects' due to the lack of viable alternatives." An important point in this regard, they also note: "Measures should be taken towards the publication by peer-reviewed journals of research studies with non-significant findings. This will reduce the unnecessary repetition of experiments and thereby animal use and wasted funding."

Sentient's full statement can be accessed at <https://www.sentient.org.au/animals-in-research>

We would also like to draw the Committee's attention to the excellent work of The MAWA Trust (medical advances without animals) a charitable trust that provides research and development grants to encourage the development of alternatives to the use of animals in biomedical research. A review of their sponsored projects reveals an array of innovative, safe and ethical approaches to assess and deliver improvements in human medicine, from using human tissue, to robotics and computer simulation. The proposals are not only humane, but more likely to be successful since the research 'model' is not a different species.

To help facilitate change, funders – government, charitable and private – need to encourage alternatives to the use of animals with financial incentives and strict requirements. Unnecessary procedures should be subject to bans. No animals should be subjected to pain or distress (if they absolutely must be used at all).

There also needs to be greater transparency around all aspects of the use of animals in research; real public accountability may prove to be a great motivator for humane research.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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