

## **Beagle Freedom Bill – The Right to Release**

### **FINDING FOREVER HOMES FOR RESEARCH ANIMALS.**

Companion animals such as cats and dogs have a very strong intrinsic value for the majority of Australians. Roughly 2,800 of these animals are reported as used in medical research in Victoria. Many of these animals are killed at the completion of research. At times the impact of the experimental protocol prevents the animal being returned to a normal life, but if this is not the case, then these companion animals should be afforded the opportunity to be rehomed by experienced rescue organisations.

Beagle Freedom Australia (BFA) is calling on the Victorian Government to instate a Bill that ensures a state wide system could take the place of the current voluntary practice, which is failing to provide rehoming opportunities for all of these animals. Such a Bill would open up the lines of communication between research facilities and rescue and rehoming centres to give cats and dogs used in research the potential opportunity to be rehomed.

In the state of Victoria there is a deficiency in law, no standard or policy exists within the Act that covers this area of research animal welfare. While *The Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* encourages rehoming; "Opportunities to rehome animals should be considered wherever possible, especially when the impact of the project or activity on the wellbeing of the animal has been minimal and their physiological condition and behavioural attributes indicate that they can be introduced to a new environment with minimal, transient impact on their wellbeing." such practices are not always taking place, it is presumed because the practice is not mandated. As a result, hundreds of healthy dogs and cats are being killed for no reason.

Beagle Freedom Australia runs as an extension to Beagle Rescue Victoria (BRV) to assist with the rehoming of retired research animals. BRV have been successfully rehabilitating beagles (and other breeds) from pounds, shelters, puppy factories, private surrenders, and more recently, retired research animals (as Beagle Freedom Australia), for over 10 years. We have successfully rehomed over 1000 beagles and other institutionalised companion animals.

In 2014 the American Beagle Freedom Project, successfully implemented a similar Bill in the states of Minnesota, it has also been passed in New York, California, Connecticut, Nevada and Illinois whereby animals used in research facilities must first offer dogs and cats to rescue centres before euthanasia. Similar Bills are currently being tabled in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Texas and Iowa.

Together with Humane Research Australia, Animal Liberation NSW, The Animal Justice Party and the Victorian citizens we call on the Victorian government to instate a bill to instate a Bill that ensures a state wide system take the place of the current voluntary practice which is failing to provide rehoming opportunities for all of these animals. Such a Bill would open up the lines of communication between research facilities and rescue and rehoming centres to give cats and dogs used in research the potential opportunity to be rehomed. If surrender cannot be arranged with any rescue organisations due to space or other concerns, the research facility can choose to either rehome privately or put the animal to sleep.

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