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8 August 2014

The Hon. Ian Hunter MLC
Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation
GPO Box 1047
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Dear Minister

I am writing to you as the Chair of the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) in response to The Hon. Jay Weatherill's letter dated 8 July 2014 regarding reforming South Australia's government boards and committees and the abolition of all Statutory Bodies (including AEC's).

The AEC Chairs and Executive Officers Group representing the various AEC's in South Australia met on 6 August 2014 to discuss this important matter. The WCHN supports the view of this group for the continuation of institutional licences and is opposed to any changes to the current requirement for the Government to licence an individual, company or institution who may need to use animals for research or teaching purposes. In addition, WCHN supports the view that the abolition of AEC's in South Australia would be detrimental to the Government, the welfare of animals and the success of health and medical research in South Australia.

The WCHN also supports the work undertaken by the Animal Welfare Unit within DEWNR in monitoring the effective execution of duties and responsibilities of all AEC's in South Australia and the welfare of all animals used for research or teaching purposes.

In relation to the notion that AEC's need to remain as Statutory Bodies (established by the Minister with members appointed by the Minister), WCHN's view is to retain its Animal Ethics Committee but not as a Statutory Body. This would enable the AEC to be established by the institution (WCHN), with the institution taking responsibility for appointing committee members and developing its own terms of reference. This is consistent with other research committees at WCHN, including the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC).

As South Australia is the only Australian jurisdiction where the Minister establishes animal ethics committees and the only jurisdiction where the Minister appoints their membership, the change to the AEC being an institutional responsibility would not diminish Government oversight and community accountability for the use of animals in research or teaching.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Robinson', written over the 'Yours sincerely' text.

PHIL ROBINSON
Chair, WCHN Animal Ethics Committee

