

DATE 30 July 2024

#### Question on notice

1. **Liz, just a question for you, please. We heard of jurisdictions where virtual fencing is used. Can you outline the discussions that you may have had with your colleagues in welfare organisations, say, with the SPCA New Zealand and RSPCA in Tasmania—their views and their understanding, having been in jurisdictions? Also in that regard, we've just heard from a witness with regard to the Tasmanian regulatory environment where there hasn't been a ban on electric fences so the regulatory environment hasn't been built up around virtual fencing; it's just that it's permitted use, and welfare aspects are then taken care of through the prevention of cruelty to animal Act.**

RSPCA Tasmania: Livestock animal welfare is the remit of the state government with complaints involving more than five livestock referred to the Department of Natural Resources & Environment (Biosecurity). However, RSPCA Tasmania receives all animal welfare complaints for triage to the relevant enforcement agency and are not aware of having received any complaints about livestock virtual fencing. The RSPCA Tasmania Inspectorate Manager did comment that, noting the novelty and complexity of these systems, that he could see the value in having specific regulations in place to govern their use. It was noted that the geographical scale and visibility of primary production in Tasmania lends itself to close monitoring of the individual animal in a way that is not as possible in states like NSW with large extensive operations in remote areas. Consequently, there may be a different risk profile to consider in each state.

SPCA New Zealand: In NZ, most commercial farm compliance is done by the Ministry for Primary Industries. SPCA have made enquiries with the Department as to any welfare reports associated with livestock virtual fencing but are yet to receive a response. At this point, SPCA New Zealand hold a position opposing livestock virtual fencing as the employment of aversive management techniques is not considered best practice [Virtual Fencing \(spca.nz\)](https://www.spcan.zk.nz/virtual-fencing). Earlier this year they called for a review of whether virtual fencing is acceptable to the public, consumers and export markets. It was, similar to the Tasmanian context, interesting to consider that a typical highly productive beef and sheep farm in New Zealand is around 200 ha in size on average while in the mountainous regions of South Island such farms can be over 1,500 ha. However, in NSW average Australian beef farms are quoted as 13,000 hectares. The smaller, and more intensive dairy production systems, may allow for closer management of the animals to ensure fewer adverse outcomes.