

Department of Justice
WorkSafe Tasmania
GPO Box 56
Rosny Park TAS 7018

By email: worksafepolicy@justice.tas.gov.au

Re: Review of Tasmania's Explosives Regulations

The RSPCA is grateful for the opportunity to make comment as part of the process for reviewing Tasmania's *Explosives Regulations 2012 (Regulations)*.

Although the *Regulations* relate to all aspects of all explosives, our comments are restricted to the use of fireworks in Tasmania.

People have long been fascinated by fireworks. Scientists tell us the unexpectedness of colour is why fireworks are so captivating; even if we wanted to, we're hardwired not to look away from the light, and we seem to be excited by the anticipation of a slightly scary experience.

Unfortunately, they can be terrifying and dangerous for animals - and for vulnerable people too.

The RSPCA receives many calls about runaway animals after fireworks displays. In particular, dogs and horses often try to run away when frightened by fireworks. Wildlife can also be affected by the unexpected noises and bright lights fireworks produce.

A dog can hear 10 times better than a human. Fireworks typically explode at a staggering 145-150 decibels - as loud as a jet engine at close quarters - so these explosions can be frightening and even harmful. Terrified animals may flee their homes trying to escape the startling and confusing blasts. Many of these animals can end up several kilometres from home. Dogs have been known to jump through plate glass windows to escape loud noises, and easily jump over, or dig their way under fences that would normally contain them. Sometimes, they end up lost or get hit by cars.

Cracker Night was last Saturday. There were many reports on social media over the weekend of lost pets. Today – Monday – we have also received many phone calls from members of the public regarding missing dogs who escaped during the events. Some have still not been found; and we are aware of several dogs who were killed as a result of escaping.

Some 32 countries throughout the world now recognise animals as "sentient" beings. This means that it is accepted that animals have feelings and awareness and can suffer from stress and anxiety.

In Australia, both the ACT and Victoria acknowledge animal sentience and have already included it in policy. It is only a matter of time until other Australian jurisdictions do the same.

For these reasons, and other safety concerns, all Australian jurisdictions, except for Northern Territory and Tasmania, have already banned fireworks use by members of the public.

Tasmanian legislation already acknowledges that fireworks can cause stress and anxiety to animals, as exclusion zones or “Sensitive Areas” around zoos, sanctuaries, kennels, or commercial horse businesses are identified in the *Regulations*.

As a general principle, the RSPCA is opposed to fireworks displays. We believe that there is no justification in causing harm - or even death - to any animal purely for entertainment.

Having said that, we recognise that many people consider fireworks displays an important part of public celebrations.

We therefore urge the government to consider limiting fireworks displays to major public events.

In the review of the *Regulations*, domestic pets should also be protected with some form of exclusion zone. The organisers of public events should be required to ensure neighbours and pet owners in the immediate vicinity are given appropriate notification. Advertising fireworks displays in advance is important – as it can give people vital time to plan and prepare for the distressing experiences their pets may face.

We would of course be pleased to provide further comment should that be required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Davis', with a large loop at the start and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jan Davis

CEO

30 May 2022