

Media Release

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Through the Looking Glass – a call for transparency in animal experiments

Humane Research Australia is calling on the Australian government to lift the veil of secrecy over animal experimentation.

Obtaining information about what actually happens to animals in research is a difficult and frustrating process. Questions to the funding bodies are usually redirected to the state or territory departments responsible for animal welfare; and the state departments usually refer back to the funding body which in Australia is the National Health & Medical Research Council. Requests for information – minutes of Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) meetings, annual reports - are denied, and straightforward requests such as statistics are, at best, “difficult” to obtain, and do not provide an accurate account of the purpose for which the animals are used.

A 2013 opinion poll commissioned by Humane Research Australia, found that **57% of respondents were not even aware animals are used in experimental research in Australia**. These experiments are often funded by Australian taxpayers - and it appears that we don't have a right to know what our precious resources are being spent (or wasted) on.

The European Union have addressed such concerns; Article 43.3 Directive 2010/63/EU now requires that **non-technical summaries (NTS)** are published by the European Member States in order to provide the public with access to information concerning projects using live animals.

NTS must include title, purpose, objectives and benefits, number and type of animals, predicted harms and application of the 3Rs (Reduction, Refinement & Replacement of animals). They must be written in non-scientific language and accessible for five years.

Humane Research Australia CEO, Helen Marston: *“Australia has a bad reputation when it comes to animal usage - being the fourth highest user, behind only China, Japan and the United States - with no commitment to reduce the numbers. And unlike more progressive nations has no government-funded institution dedicated to the development and validation of alternative research methods.”*

“Australia has a long way to go in giving laboratory animals a better deal – lifting the veil of secrecy, by following in the EU's footsteps, should be the first step.”

For more information: <http://www.humaneresearch.org.au/campaigns/through-the-looking-glass>