



For all creatures great and small.

## Media Release

### 5,342 pre-schoolers learn RSPCA dog safety program

RSPCA NSW today released its Humane Education program statistics, revealing that over a two year period (2004-06), RSPCA teachers directly taught lessons including safety around dogs, kindness to animals and responsible pet ownership to 5,342 pre-school children (three to five year olds) in rural, regional and metropolitan areas of the state.

In the past year alone (2005-06), the RSPCA directly taught more than 20,000 children in the kindergarten to year six age bracket, with direct presentations to more than 50,000 older primary and high school students and community group members.

And despite some media reports, the only dogs to visit schools are plush toy dogs – not living creatures – a commitment the RSPCA's Humane Education Manager Suzanne Thomas vows will continue, based on research into children's learning.

"It's well recognised that children learn more key messages without the distraction of a dog in the classroom," she said. "Other important factors are safety, the stress on the dog, the sheer number of school talks and the areas covered each year."

Ms Thomas said the RSPCA's Humane Education program is linked to the NSW schools curriculum and has been welcomed by representatives of the Department of Education at Sydney University.

"The RSPCA has invested funds and energy in reaching as many children as possible over many years and during the past two years we have formalised and stepped up the program," she said. "Our commitment to children's future as responsible guardians of animals will continue."

She said RSPCA school visits are not ad-hoc but are planned and formalised, covering pre school, kindergarten, primary and high schools. Lesson plans and teacher and parent resources linked to the program are also important elements in improving children's safety and reducing animal suffering.

"The RSPCA also has a training program for education volunteers so our charity resources can stretch further to reach more children. Despite limited resources, we are serious about reaching as many young people as possible."

The RSPCA has also applauded the state government's commitment to humane education and all other responsible moves to teach children about animal welfare.

"More children are learning respect, compassion and consideration for the feelings and needs of other living creatures. This will have flow-on benefits throughout their lives."

October 17, 2006