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## **Human-Nonhuman Animal Relationships in Australia: An Overview of Results from the First National Survey and Follow-up Case Studies 2000-2004**

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### **Abstract**

This paper provides an overview of results from an Australian Research Council-funded project “Sentiments and Risks: The Changing Nature of Human-Animal Relations in Australia.” The data discussed come from a survey of 2000 representative Australians at the capital city, state, and rural regional level. It provides both a snapshot of the state of involvement of Australians with nonhuman animals and their views on critical issues: ethics, rights, animals as food, risk from animals, native versus introduced animals, hunting, fishing, and companionate relations with animals. Its data point to key trends and change. The changing position of animals in Australian society is critical to understand, given its historic export markets in meat and livestock, emerging tourism industry with its strong wildlife focus, native animals’ place in discourses of nation, and the centrality of animal foods in the national diet. New anxieties about risk from animal-sourced foods and the endangerment of native animals from development and introduced species, together with tensions between animals’ rights and the privileging of native species, contribute to the growth of a strongly contested animal politics in Australia.

### **Keywords**

Animals, Australia, human-nonhuman relationships, companion animals, wildlife, national survey

### **Introduction**

This paper is based on the first national study of human-nonhuman animals’ relationships ever conducted in Australia. Of course it is not the first study to collect data on human-animal relationships; however, it is the first comprehensive survey that spans relationships with companion species, wildlife, sporting species, food species, “risk” species as well as key topics such as ethics, rights, and animal-related social movements and politics. That such a survey was conducted in Australia ought not to be surprising:

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1. Historically, the Australian economy has been supported strongly by its meat and livestock industries;
2. Increasingly, animals and wildlife feature in Australian tourism marketing;
3. Australia faces the possibility of at least a similar range of significant animal-related risks as have occurred elsewhere; and
4. Tensions over the eradication policies for introduced animals have produced conflict in Australian environmental politics.

Our findings confirm that animals form a backcloth to a great deal of Australian life, both embodied and symbolic.

The study, an Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded project, "Sentiments and Risks: The Changing Nature of Human-Animal Relations," took place between 2000 and 2004. It combined a nationally representative survey of 2000 respondents with a series of case studies focused around veterinary practice and relationships with wildlife. The survey was conducted by phone with Australians over the age of 16, and we randomized the choice of respondent in each household by asking to speak with the person whose birthday was next. This guaranteed that all ages and genders are represented. We also created statistically representative interview targets for all capital cities and state rural areas. The main survey was administered by NCS Pearson, and the survey instrument was comprised of 13 key questions, 5 of which established key data on the type of animal with whom respondents shared their lives; 7 were Likert-type questions that investigated values and practices with respect to animals generally; and one question was comprised of a battery of sub-questions obtaining key social, economic, and demographic data. The overall response rate was 35% (calculated as a proportion of answered calls).

### Keeping Nonhuman Animals

An overwhelming majority (68%) of Australians keep at least one animal on their property. The range of ownership is wide, from 55% in Sydney to 81% and 86%, respectively, in the Australian Capital Territory and Hobart (Table 1).

**Table 1. Do You Keep Animals on Your Property?**

	Total	Sydney	Melb	Brisbane	Perth	Adelaide	ACT	Hobart
Respondents	2000	430	361	153	140	122	36	21
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Yes	1356	238	214	106	105	94	29	18
	68%	55%	59%	69%	75%	77%	81%	86%

Table 1. (*cont.*)

	Total	Sydney	Melb	Brisbane	Perth	Adelaide	ACT	Hobart
No	644	192	147	47	35	28	7	3
	32%	45%	41%	31%	25%	23%	19%	14%

The propensity to keep animals is of course a function both of opportunities to do so and the degree to which keeping them is valued culturally. In a large, highly cosmopolitan city such as Sydney with large, migrant communities from around the world, the desirability of keeping animals—especially as companion animals—may be less than in other cities such as Hobart where an Anglo-Celtic, pro-companion animal culture dominates. Our survey did not record ethnic status because we could not guarantee statistical reliability at that level of disaggregation, but this is clearly where more work needs to be done. In Sydney, household and living space is more expensive and, consequently, more limited; many inner city dwellers live in high-rise apartments where there are restrictive covenants on keeping animals. By comparison, more households in Perth, Adelaide, and Hobart have access to the national benchmark of a detached, suburban home on a “quarter-acre block.”

Very few Australian households keep animals other than companion species. Of these households, 4% have a horse or pony on their property (and these may well be considered companions by many); 2% have poultry; sheep or cattle are kept by only 1% of households.

In rural areas, horse keeping is more common: 11% of households in rural Victoria keep them; in rural Queensland, 9%. However, the proportion keeping non-companion animals in rural areas is still very small. No rural state area has more than 4% of households keeping poultry, cattle, or sheep.

In our survey, the vast majority of animals kept by Australians are companion animals, of whom the dog is the most popular (47% of households have at least one) followed by cats (30%), birds (17%), fish (13%), and rabbits (4%). A very large range of other species is kept as companions, including many native species of reptiles and some insects.

In gender terms, women are more likely than men to keep animals, but the difference is marginal: 50% versus 43% for dogs, 32% versus 25% for cats, 11% versus 9% for fish, and 15% for both genders for birds. Keeping animals is remarkably similar among all income groups, and it is really only in those households where total income falls below \$30,000 that fewer than 70% (the average) keep them. Other factors that correlate with higher-than-average animal keeping are marital status, age, level of education, and occupation (Franklin, 2006a).

Households of married or *de facto* partners are more likely to keep animals, and those with children under the age of 18 are even more likely to keep an animal. Respondents between 30 and 55 years of age are more likely to keep animals than those younger than 30 or older than 50. Again, this seems to confirm that companion-animal keeping tends to link with the family or dependent children stage of the lifecycle and then to dwindle away. However, we should also note the high proportions (approximately 62%) of those in their 20s who keep animals as well as those in their 70s (50%). In both groups, it is most likely that the animals were bought to assist their keepers in coping with new circumstances, on or around leaving home or retiring. Indeed, dogs or cats kept by those aged 71-75 are—in almost every case—at least 10 years old. As we shall see, contemporary lifestyles leave many Australians alone after long and rich periods of family living. We are very prone to loneliness these days, and significant animals are a remarkable substitute when it is just not feasible to surround ourselves with significant humans, (Soares, 1985; Wilson & Turner, 1998; Beck & Katcher, 1983; Katcher & Beck, 1983; Garrity, Stallones, Marx, & Johnson, 1988; Council for Science & Society, 1988; Salmon & Salmon, 1983).

There is also an interesting correlation between keeping animals and educational attainment. Crudely, the lower the educational attainment of household members, the higher the proportion of households in which animals are kept. The range is quite significant as between 38% of those with doctorates and 79% of those with no educational attainments; however, this inverse relationship varies smoothly across the range of attainment levels. This is confirmed by data on occupations that show a difference between the unskilled blue-collar (79%) and the white-collar professionals (64%). Even the unemployed have above-average levels of animal keeping (74%), and this might be partly explained by their disproportionate origin from lower socio-economic groups where companion animal keeping is very popular and partly because they do have the time necessary to look after them. These findings are at least consistent with what we discovered about involvements and values in what could be called the “animal politics” field. So, for example, the Wilderness Society (WS) runs a hard line on introduced animals who escape and become feral and on introduced animals generally. Almost 90% of the sample with doctorates and 78% of those who have tertiary qualifications were WS supporters. However, more than half the sample had either no qualifications or only school-leaving certificates; among those, only 57% were members of WS. Another way to look at this is by examining the results we obtained for attitudes to native animals around the home. Again, they show that the most highly educated take a pro-native animal position as compared with the less well-educated, particularly when it comes to action to keep native animals off their property.

*Hybrid Families?*

Sociologists of contemporary societies such as Australia have documented increasing individualization, fragmentation of family and community, and frailty of the human bond—at all levels of society. Extensive loneliness in society and high degrees of ontological insecurity are widely reported (Giddens, 1984; Bauman, 2003, Furedi, 2005).<sup>2</sup> As Bauman (2000, 2003) has repeatedly claimed, human marriage, friendship, partnership, community ties, and even love have become insecure, ephemeral, and fugitive: In his own poetic words, they have become “until further notice.”

At the same time, we have witnessed a dramatic growth in the numbers of companion species kept as well as changes in the style of their keeping. Table 2, for example, shows that 24% of respondents were more likely to keep pets now than they were a few years ago, as opposed to 17% who were less likely to keep them.

**Table 2. (For each activity please indicate whether you are more likely or less likely to do that activity now than you were a few years ago).**

	Keeping pets	Visiting aquariums/ wildlife parks/zoos	Watching wildlife programs on TV	Donating money to animal charities	Joining a group concerned with animal welfare
All Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%
More likely	471 24%	655 33%	1037 52%	594 30%	305 15%
Less likely	348 17%	301 15%	92 5%	131 7%	232 12%
No change	348 17%	301 15%	92 5%	131 7%	232 12%
Never	1076 54%	964 48%	828 41%	99 5%	605 30%
Don't know	1 0%	3 0%	2 0%	4 0%	6 0%
Totals	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%

It has been shown that these two trends may well be connected (Franklin, 1999; Franklin & White, 2000), but until now there has been little hard data to confirm it.

The data from the survey appear to further suggest that many Australian families have become hybridized: The constitution of family membership, the sharing of intimate household space, and the nature of companionability no longer seem exclusively human.

Table 3 shows where the animals belonging to my respondents are allowed in their homes. A lot of evidence (Franklin, forthcoming, 2006) points to a period in the mid-twentieth century when dogs and cats were largely kept outside. This is no longer true. The most intimate spaces previously exclusively reserved for humans are now shared with companion animals. More than 50% allow animals into their bedrooms; 75% of respondents allow animals into the family or lounge room; and almost 50% allow their animals on the furniture. Indeed, a minimum of more than one-third of all households allowed animals the full run of the house. Does this spatial shift register anything more important? I think it does.

**Table 3. Where Are Animals Allowed in the Home?**

	In the back yard	On the veranda/balcony	In the laundry	In the kitchen	In the room where you eat	In the family or lounge room	In your bedroom	In childrens bedroom	On the furniture
Yes	1277 95%	1060 79%	972 72%	892 66%	833 62%	1028 76%	707 52%	468 35%	647 48%
No	66 5%	258 19%	373 28%	456 34%	514 38%	322 24%	640 47%	844 63%	700 52%
Don't know	7 1%	32 2%	5 0%	2 0%	3 0%	3 0%	38 3%	3 0%	3 0%
Totals	1350 100%	1350 100%	1350 100%	1350 100%	1350 100%	1350 100%	1350 100%	1350 100%	1350 100%

Table 4 shows that the vast majority of Australian adults have recruited an animal for company; it is overwhelmingly so in the case of dogs (82%) and cats (79%). In a previous book (Franklin, 1999), I argued that those in Western Anglophone societies who have suffered family trauma and who find themselves alone and possibly socially and physically insecure or isolated often acquire companion animals, particularly dogs and cats. Divorce, separation, single parenthood, economic depression, the migration of young people from country areas, and insecure local labor markets all serve to increase the numbers of people living alone or in households, stranded away from former kin. The numbers of lone or small household units has increased dramatically in the past 30 years, to the point where the building industry now builds for a different, lonelier demogra-

phy. “According to U.S. Census Bureau projections, by 2010, 31 million Americans will be living alone, a 40% increase from 1980” (Schonwold, 2002). According to the BBC, “the independent Family Policy Studies Centre (FPSC) findings show that more than 6.5 million people in Britain—about 28% of households—now live on their own, 3 times as many as 40 years ago.” (*Britain singled out*, 2000).

**Table 4. Why Keep Animals?**

Amusement and entertainment of children	91 30%	143 24%	207 22%	91 45%
For competitive showing	7 2%	3 1%	18 2%	1 0%
For other competition or sport	3 1%	2 0%	16 2%	1 0%
For work	4 1%	4 1%	54 6%	1 0%
For security and protection	4 1%	13 2%	452 48%	
As company for yourself	153 50%	468 79%	775 82%	25 12%
As company for children	112 37%	259 44%	410 43%	32 16%

In Australia, things are no different. In an *Address to the Sydney Institute*, Lindsay Tanner, MP for Melbourne, describes it as, “a crisis of loneliness.” (L. Tanner, personal communication, May 4, 1999), citing significant proportions of the elderly and young as being at risk. The latest survey on loneliness among Australians aged 25-44—the group that has experienced the highest increase in solitary living—found that 16% of both men and women agreed with the statement, “I often feel lonely” (Flood, 2005, p. 11). However, 33% of men and 23% of women living alone reported feeling lonely often. Clearly, people believe that their loneliness will be alleviated by animal companionship (and as I will show, companionship is the single, biggest reason given for acquiring a dog, a cat, or a bird); indeed, the most sophisticated research using the “Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale” found that participants living entirely alone were more lonely than those living with pets.

Even those who are currently setting up new households put off having children for longer and are far more likely to have no children or only one. Such households frequently buy dogs or cats to fill out their household, to provide a focus for their relationship, or to provide surrogate siblings for “only children.” Our survey data support the notion that pet keeping responds to transformations in family and lifecycle change. In married and *de facto* households the proportion of dog owners who chose dogs for their company was 80%; in divorced or separated households, the proportion rose to 88%; in widowed households, to 90%; and among the retired, 91%. Similarly the divorced and separated are more likely to choose a dog for security and protection than are married/*de facto* households (Franklin, 2006a).

In Franklin (1999), I also argued that a number of indicators show that companion animals had been increasingly brought closer to their human friends in emotional and social terms, indeed, that they were now often reckoned to be part of the family. We therefore asked whether respondents considered any of their animals to be members of their families. This not only indicates the surrogacy of animals for significant human relationships, but it also indicates a breakdown in the perceived difference between humans and nonhumans.

We also asked about animals as family members because this ascription came up spontaneously and frequently in a series of focus groups conducted in advance of the national survey. This translation is commonly referred to as anthropomorphism, or the attribution of human-like qualities to animals that are merely whimsical fantasies of the human imagination. This may be so, but it is not necessarily so. If people are merely extending to animals as animals, the notion of belonging and recognizing close bonds with them as equivalent to those within human families, then this is not a case of anthropomorphism; it is a case of hybridization, hybridization of the family.

Unproblematic similarities might include co-residence, enduring ties, emotional inter-dependence, friendship, company, and shared activities. Where this happens, it is important to realize that it is not a one-way, human-orchestrated attribution but one built of close feelings and emotions self evidently expressed also by the animals themselves. We see with birds—especially of the parrot and cockatiel family—emotions such as jealousy, dependence, and embodied practices such as cuddling and kissing. Some of these of course are parrot expressions, translations of courtship, and pair-bonding behaviors that can be observed between parrots; however, the critical point is that some of them are not. Some of them are specific to the bonds between humans and animals, unique to them (Anderson, 2001; 2004). A good example of this is the vocal expressions between cats and humans. Cats are largely mute in their dealing with each other in the wild, but they seem to have learned of the significance of vocalization between



humans and the fact that humans vocalize to them. The cat's meow is the most significant (though it has many variations): Cats do not meow to each other. It is also true that the breeds who have been domesticated the longest are also the most vocal in their dealings with their human companions. According to *The truth about cats and dogs* (2003), "we really should understand cats better as they've gone to the trouble of developing special forms of communication just to talk to humans, using body language and vocalisation which they'd never use with other cats" (press release, no page number).

As Table 5 shows, the overwhelming majority of Australians did ascribe family membership to their pets. This may not be so new, but what seems to be new is the willingness to express it. As part of a follow-up study, 10 veterinarians were interviewed. One of the 10, a veterinarian in an affluent suburb in Sydney, had this to say about companion animals as substitute children or just children:

Well funny enough people are actually willing to admit that it's a substitute child. They're not embarrassed to actually say that. A lot of them actually say it is a substitute child. I notice that—I don't recall that so much in the past, but in recent years I have noticed that people actually refer to it as their child in many ways, you know. (Veterinarian 2)

**Table 5. Animals as Members of the Family by City  
(Do You Think of Any Animals You Keep as Members of Your Family?)**

	Total	Sydney	Melb	Brisbane	Perth
All Respondents	2000	430	361	153	140
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Asked Respondents	1350	237	214	105	105
Yes	1188	199	196	95	99
% Asked Respondents	88%	84%	92%	90%	94%
No	159	37	18	10	6
% Asked Respondents	12%	16%	8%	10%	6%
Don't know	3	3			
% Asked Respondents	0%	1%			
Not asked	650	193	147	48	35
	33%	45%	41%	31%	25%
Totals	2000	430	361	153	140
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

On average, 88% thought that the animals they keep were part of their family, and this varied between the capital cities—from a low of 84% in Sydney to 94% in Hobart. Variation does not seem to range across an urban-rural continuum: For example, the figure was low in the ACT (78%), which is dominated by Canberra, and high in rural Victoria (91%). Arguably, this signals something dramatically new in family life in Australia, although clearly more qualitative work needs to be done to follow up these findings.

### *Wildlife*

In Low (2003), it is clear that even the largest Australian cities are teeming with a wide range of wildlife; so it is not surprising that respondents confirmed this impression. Large numbers of respondents in east coast cities of all scales reported a broad range of localized wildlife. It is notable perhaps that snakes are experienced locally by more than half of our respondents.

The density of wildlife in ordinary Australians' lives is further illustrated by Table 6, which shows the extent to which different species are tolerated, encouraged, or discouraged around their homes. More than half our sample actively encouraged birds and butterflies, 46% encouraged frogs, 38% encouraged lizards, 23% encouraged wallabies and a further 34% encouraged other native animals.

Equally noteworthy is the degree to which some species that can cause problems in homes and gardens are tolerated. Fifty-eight% of respondents tolerated bats, 50% tolerated kangaroos, 38% tolerated possums, 26% tolerated snakes, and 23% tolerated toads (of whom cane toads made up a large proportion). However, it was also toads who were most actively kept off home properties (69%). Snakes (71%), dogs (61%), and cats (61%) were significantly discouraged. Other orientations to wildlife are summarized in Table 7. In common with the main finding that Australians live cheek-by-jowl with animals, it is no surprise that 78% reported observing wildlife at least once in the past year; 50% reported observing frequently. More surprising, perhaps, is the extent to which feeding featured in interactions with animals: A total of 60% reported feeding wildlife at least once in the last year, with 32% feeding frequently. The data cannot be disaggregated by species, but it is suspected that birds account for a large proportion of species fed. Next in order of significance is photographing wildlife. Altogether, 39% reported this activity in the past year, with 13% being frequent photographers of wildlife.

One-third of the sample reported visits to wildlife parks, aquariums, and zoos at least once a year. That very few visited more than that suggests that it is predominantly a vacation activity.

Table 6. Native Animals and the Home

	Type of animal											Other native animal	
	Bats	Birds	Butter- flies	Cats	Dogs	Frogs	Kangaroo	Lizards	Possum	Snakes	Toads		Wallaby
Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%
Only found local area	856	1980	1852	1919	1920	1311	410	1703	1611	1185	729	391	1041
Encourage % Local area	51 6%	1231 62%	970 52%	113 6%	131 7%	603 46%	88 21%	647 38%	237 15%	29 2%	33 5%	90 23%	357 34%
Tolerate % Local area	493 58%	671 34%	833 45%	626 33%	608 32%	571 44%	203 50%	948 56%	613 38%	306 26%	171 23%	191 49%	471 45%
Try to keep off % Local area	297 35%	73 4%	34 2%	1170 61%	1166 61%	130 10%	115 28%	99 6%	298 18%	844 71%	503 69%	105 27%	152 15%
Don't know % Local area	15 2%	5 0%	15 1%	10 1%	15 1%	7 1%	4 1%	9 1%	13 1%	6 1%	22 3%	5 1%	61 6%
N/A Not found local area	1144 57%	20 1%	148 7%	81 4%	80 4%	689 34%	1590 80%	297 15%	389 19%	815 41%	1271 64%	1609 80%	959 48%
Total	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%

Table 7. Animals Related Activities

	Feeding wildlife	Fishing (rivers or) lakes	Fishing (sea)	Horse riding	Hunting feral animals	Hunting native animals	Observing wildlife	Photo- graphing wildlife	Pet shows (cat, dog, etc as compet- itor)	Pet shows (as visitor)	Visit to a wildlife park	Visit to a zoo	
Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	
Frequently	632 32%	265 13%	209 10%	101 5%	47 2%	7 0%	998 50%	263 13%	30 2%	56 3%	79 4%	158 8%	85 4%
At least once	569 28%	343 17%	327 16%	184 9%	59 3%	21 1%	557 28%	519 26%	30 2%	380 19%	616 31%	762 38%	655 33%
Never	796 40%	1392 70%	1464 73%	1715 86%	1894 95%	1972 99%	444 22%	1216 61%	1940 97%	1563 78%	1304 65%	1076 54%	1259 63%
Don't know	3 0%						1 0%	2 0%		1 0%	1 0%	4 0%	1 0%
Total	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	

Although pet shows are not a major draw, they did attract approximately one-fifth of the respondents over the past year, most likely to annual, regional, rural Show days, where they have had a presence at least for the past 60 years.

Consumptive wildlife activities (fishing, hunting) are less significant, although 56% of our sample fished at least once in the past year, and 23% reported being more serious anglers. Hunting is done by a tiny minority of men. Only 2% hunted feral animals frequently; a further 3% hunted at least once. Although a total of 107 respondents hunted feral or introduced species, only 8 hunted native species.

### *Risk*

Australian wildlife is notorious for generating fear among visitors to the country. There are large numbers of poisonous snakes and insects; the blue-ringed octopus is feared, as are some shellfish. Equally, saltwater crocodiles and sharks feature very commonly in attacks on bathers and surfers, as do the painful stings from several species of jelly fish (known collectively as marine stingers). But to what extent are these anxieties shared by Australians who live so closely to this marine and terrestrial wildlife?

Table 8 sets out responses to questions about the level of anxiety experienced across a range of species and types of animal risk. Approximately 43% of Australians experience some anxiety in relation to these animal-related risks. Snakes and spiders are clearly the most significant in generating anxiety followed by mosquitoes, marine stingers, and dogs. Inevitably, as the dog population rises, the numbers of dogs on the loose may rise accordingly; clearly, some breeds notorious for biting have been fashionable in the past 10 years. It is significant also that the meat industry—or at least meat itself—creates some anxiety among 42% of the population; 18% are now very anxious. This is borne out from survey questions relating to anticipated changes in attitudes to human consumption of meat (Table 9). So, 27% of respondents said they were less likely to eat meat now as compared to a few years ago.

### *Attitudes to "Animal" Issues*

For the past 30 years or so, animals have been at the center of an increasing number of political and ethical controversies. Tables 10 and 11 set out in summary form the overall national response to questions on these issues.

Vegetarian views, at least in respect to the acceptability of killing animals for food, were expressed by only 6% of respondents. However, 52% of respondents thought that factory-farming methods of producing meat, eggs, and milk (which are becoming dominant trends) were cruel. It is not clear whether respondents knew what proportion of their animal-related foods was produced by these

**Table 8. Animals and Risk  
(Please Tell Me Whether You Feel Anxious about the Following Risks)**

	Type of risk										
	Attack by dog	Attack by farm animal	Attack by native animals	Stings or bites from Marine stingers	Stings or bites from Snakes	Stings or bites from Spiders	Stings or bites from Mosquitoes	Disease carried in meat	Mosquito born diseases	Disease carried by pets	Disease in animal droppings
Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%
Very anxious	316 16%	79 4%	130 7%	303 15%	695 35%	658 33%	295 15%	361 18%	452 23%	186 9%	210 11%
Quite anxious	603 30%	213 11%	302 15%	642 32%	517 26%	615 31%	557 28%	473 24%	709 35%	471 24%	508 25%
Not anxious	1069 53%	1688 84%	1549 77%	1037 52%	778 39%	720 36%	1143 57%	1142 57%	825 41%	1332 67%	1260 63%
Don't know	12 1%	20 1%	19 1%	18 1%	10 1%	7 0%	5 0%	24 1%	14 1%	11 1%	22 1%
Total	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%

**Table 9. (For each activity please indicate whether you are more likely or less likely to do that activity now than you were a few years ago).**

	Eating fish	Eating meat	Buying free range eggs	Buying products that have been tested on animals	Fishing	Hunting	Keeping pets	Visiting aquariums/wildlife parks/zoos	Watching wildlife programs on TV	Donating money to animal charities	Joining a group concerned with animal welfare
All Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%
More likely	713 36%	225 11%	963 48%	68 3%	282 14%	32 2%	471 24%	655 33%	1037 52%	594 30%	305 15%
Less likely	124 6%	538 27%	85 4%	742 37%	375 19%	287 14%	348 17%	301 15%	92 5%	131 7%	232 12%
No change	124 6%	538 27%	85 4%	742 37%	375 19%	287 14%	348 17%	301 15%	92 5%	131 7%	232 12%
Never	1105 55%	1202 60%	763 38%	641 32%	774 39%	253 13%	1076 54%	964 48%	828 41%	99 5%	605 30%
Don't know	1 0%	0 0%	28 1%	113 6%	1 0%	1 0%	1 0%	3 0%	2 0%	4 0%	6 0%
Totals	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%

Table 10. Attitudes to Animal Issues

	It is quite acceptable to eat meat so long as the animals are reared and killed humanely	The meat production and processing industries can be trusted to ensure the safety of the meat product	Modern methods of "factory farming" in the production of eggs, milk and meat are unnatural	Modern methods of "factory farming" in the production of eggs, milk and meat are cruel	It is wrong to use native Australian animals such as Kangaroo and Wallaby as food	People who are killed or injured by animals have usually brought their misfortune on themselves	Hunting is an extension of natural processes that take place in the wild and is therefore quite acceptable
All Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%
Strongly agree	520 26%	191 10%	293 15%	380 19%	241 12%	301 15%	86 4%
Agree	1344 67%	1067 53%	712 36%	668 33%	478 24%	975 49%	526 26%
Disagree	90 5%	493 25%	676 34%	691 35%	964 48%	488 24%	842 42%
Strongly disagree	26 1%	128 6%	114 6%	98 5%	241 12%	82 4%	455 23%
Have no opinion/DK	20 1%	121 6%	205 10%	163 8%	76 4%	154 8%	91 5%
Total	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%



Table 11. Attitudes to Animal Issues

	It is quite acceptable to hunt feral animals such as pigs and wild horses that degrade the environment	It is wrong to hunt native Australian animals	Fishing for recreation is more acceptable than hunting for recreation	Keeping animals as pets is unnatural and demeaning to both the humans and the animal	People who mistreat their animals should be punished in the same way as people who mistreat	Animals should have the same moral rights as human beings	It is right to use animals for medical testing if it might save human lives
All Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%
Strongly agree	392 20%	701 35%	396 20%	44 2%	908 45%	293 15%	152 8%
Agree	953 48%	717 36%	1158 58%	166 8%	772 39%	799 40%	949 47%
Disagree	428 21%	381 19%	319 16%	958 48%	245 12%	675 34%	529 26%
Strongly disagree	147 7%	125 6%	62 3%	756 38%	50 3%	125 6%	242 12%
Have no opinion/DK	80 4%	76 4%	65 3%	76 4%	25 1%	408 20%	128 6%
Total	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%

methods or—if they did know—what proportion of those respondents would continue to eat such foods. However, that is a moot question. Even so, more than 30% of respondents felt that the production and processing industries could not be trusted to ensure the safety of meat, adding to the controversy and doubt surrounding what was once felt to be a foundational aspect of Australian life: Historically, by global standards, Australians are very high consumers of meat (Franklin, 1999, p. 151).

There is a degree of ambiguity surrounding the position of native animals in Australia, at least as far as their consumption is concerned. On the one hand, they are totemic of Australian nationhood, and there is a strong conservation impulse. This is borne out when 71% of respondents agree that it is wrong to hunt native animals. On the other hand, many native animal species are abundant and often experience localized population explosions. This may account for the relatively small number of Australians (36%) who agree that it is wrong to use native animals such as wallabies and kangaroos as food. However, it does of course depend on the native species concerned. Fishing for recreation is a good deal more acceptable (it is acceptable to 78% of respondents) than hunting for recreation.

Relatively few Australians (10%) are supportive of the claim by some animal rights writers that pet keeping is demeaning, but a solid majority (55%) agreed with the proposition that animals should have the same moral rights as human beings. Moreover, the proportion who thinks this has increased since this question was asked the first time in 1993. Back then, only 42% of Australians agreed with the proposition (*Zentralarchiv für empirische*, 1995).

The unanticipated growth in this animal rights orientation makes sense when we look at data from questions relating to membership and support for a variety of animal organizations. Table 12 demonstrates that a large proportion of support goes to those organizations that do uphold and represent some, albeit limited, animal rights principles. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which fought to save the introduced wild horse, or Brumby, from eradication by aerial shooting in Guy Fawkes River National Park, New South Wales, is the most significant organization among our respondents: Of our respondents, 2% were members; 91% were supporters. On the other hand, the Wilderness Society, which does not support the notion of animal rights but instead privileges the rights of native over introduced species, has only 1% respondent membership and only 64% supporters.

Across all these organizations, there was only a very small proportion of members, but the support claimed by respondents was robust and opposition to them, negligible. As Table 9 shows, 15% of respondents felt they were more likely to join a group concerned with animal welfare than they had been in the past; 37% said they were less likely to buy products that had been tested on animals.

Table 12. Association with Animal Organizations

	Canine Defence League	Greenpeace	Earth First	PETA (People for the ethical treatment of animals)	RSPCA (Royal Society for prevention of cruelty to animals)	Wilderness Society	World Wildlife Fund
All Respondents	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%
Member	0%	36 2%	1 0%	4 0%	44 2%	21 1%	21 1%
Supporter	324 16%	1139 57%	492 25%	622 31%	1812 91%	1287 64%	1263 63%
Opponent	23 1%	140 7%	20 1%	34 2%	18 1%	25 1%	18 1%
No view	1653 83%	685 34%	1487 74%	1340 67%	126 6%	667 33%	698 35%
Totals	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%	2000 100%

### Conclusion

This paper has reported some of the key findings from a national survey of human-animal relationships in Australia. It suggests that Australia is quite typical of trends in human-animal relationships observed in other Western societies, particularly in the extent to which emotional bonds between humans and companionate species have developed a familial, home-centered focus. Australians relate to animals in a number of spheres and with similar intensities noted for other countries (Franklin, 1999).

Australians live very closely with a wide range of wildlife, and this co-habitation extends into its large cities. Their relationships with wildlife are encouraging on the whole, and only a few species that cause problems are discouraged. Despite this degree of familiarity and contiguity, Australians are not complacent with regard to risks posed from dangerous, wild animals; a very significant proportion of them experience animal-related risk anxiety.

Although Australians are among the highest consumers of meat, recent concerns about ethics and risk issues have created a significant minority who appear to question established practices and change their own values and habits.

Australia is among those post-colonial countries in which there is a distinct biopolitical tension between native and introduced species. Although nativism (a totemic, pro-native stance) is pronounced and evident in a range of data collected in this survey, it is also true that a more generic animal rights trend can be detected both in terms of questions related to moral equivalence with humans and product testing and in terms of organizational support and membership.

### Notes

1. Requests for reprints should be sent to Adrian S. Franklin, School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania, Private Bag 17, Hobart, Tasmania 7001 Australia. E-mail: Adrian.Franklin@utas.edu.au

2. According to Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (*The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, 2005), ontological security "refers to the security, order and regularity that people feel in their lives, which are likely to be most clearly experienced in a stable sense of personal identity over time". Clearly, divorce, spatial mobility, labour market change and cultural change produce a churning of ontological security or ontological insecurity.

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