



Psychologists for Animal Welfare (PAW)
An interest Group of the
Australian Psychological Society

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DISTURBING LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL CRUELTY AND VIOLENCE TOWARDS HUMANS

People who derive joy from causing distress or harm to animals are more likely to engage in antisocial, violent and criminal behaviour, according to Psychologists for Animal Welfare (PAW).

North Sydney financier, Brendan Francis McMahon, accused of mutilating and killing 17 rabbits and a guinea pig recently lost a second bid to have his charges dismissed. Mr McMahon claims his mental state was disturbed at the time of the alleged offences but the judge rejected his application.

While McMahon will learn his fate in the coming weeks, the distressing fates of the rabbits are already known. Equally distressing is the significant and growing body of evidence that shows a disturbing link between violence towards animals and violence towards humans.

Associate Professor of Psychology, and Convenor of PAW, Eleonora Gullone said, "Animal cruelty is a serious concern for many reasons. Firstly there is the welfare of the animals involved. Secondly, there is evidence showing that people who take pleasure from causing distress or harm to other living beings are more likely to undertake antisocial, violent and criminal behaviour towards humans."

Mr McMahon is accused of routinely mutilating rabbits, bought over the counter at various Sydney pet stores. June Bird of Say No To Animals in Pet Shops argues that it is far too easy for people to purchase an animal. "Just put down your money and you can use and abuse at will," said Bird. "We want to see justice for the lives of the animals that this man took and we want to see all animals removed from pet shops."

Gullone urges that given the violent and repetitive nature of Mr McMahon's alleged crimes and the undeniable link between cruelty to animals and interpersonal violence, he should be required to undergo a comprehensive psychological assessment and the necessary counselling. "As repeat crimes are the rule rather than the exception with animal abusers, all possible measures must be taken to ensure that these people are barred from any future ownership or possession of animals," she said.

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