



31 July 2019

The Secretary
Legislative Council, Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

To Whom it May Concern

Re: Submission - Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture

Diamond Valley Pork is located at Laverton, west of Melbourne and operates the state's largest pig abattoir and Victoria's only export licenced pig processing facility. Diamond Valley employs 280 staff whose annual salaries contribute to a sizeable \$15m to Victorian households. The business was established in 2003 on a greenfield site and has embarked on a steady expansion program over the last 15+ years to increase its capacity and improve its animal welfare standards and overall efficiency. Currently, the plant is completing a further upgrade totalling approx. \$15m. This project will ensure livestock remains in Victoria for processing and additional jobs are made available to Victorian residents.

Diamond Valley Pork is an Export registered establishment (822). We have an Australian Government employed Vet (OPV) on the premises when we process. He is responsible to oversee the Ante mortem procedure and all Animal Welfare standards according to "The Australian Standard for the hygienic production and transport of meat and meat products for human consumption AS 4696 2007 and Industry animal welfare Standards second edition". We also hold Ausmeat accreditation under the "Livestock Welfare Certified System". Diamond Valley Pork is approved to process RSPCA approved pigs and we are audited to higher customer Standards, including those of major supermarkets.

Livestock processed at the Diamond Valley plant are processed on a contract, service processing arrangement. The livestock remains owned by the producer or its third-party agent, and livestock transport is arranged and paid for by these third parties.

The Diamond Valley facility has been subjected to regular activist visits, ranging from unauthorised trespass where individuals have chained themselves to equipment and occupied the roof of the building, vigorous weeklong protests at the plants entrances marking seasonal industry events, to routine requests to stop livestock vehicles on adjoining public roads. On almost all occasions, police have attended (sometimes in very significant numbers), to ensure the safety of the protestors, the young children who accompany them, workers, motorists, truck drivers and the public due to the location being on public roads.

Diamond Valley Pork continues to work with Victorian government agencies to manage the situation, including Victoria Police and Biosecurity and Agriculture Services.

The interruption and cost to our business, and third parties, such as farmers and truck drivers delivering stock and the police themselves has and can be significant. Noting these protests are inhibiting the rights of farmers of taking their stock to market. Security costs at Diamond Valley during some protests have been excessive and significantly impacted operations, with recent plant upgrades also requiring significant capital expenditure to perimeter security. Additionally, the welfare of livestock on trucks has had to be closely monitored, with state government veterinarians being called upon at times of high summer temperatures to ensure pigs welfare was not compromised.

The Victorian Work Health and Safety Act 2011 stipulates businesses have a primary duty of care for the safety of all workers and any other persons at the workplace, including visitors. Uncontrolled and illegal visitor entry risks injury to the visitor, injury to our people, and possible subsequent compensation claims against our business. We do not believe Diamond Valley Pork should carry this burden. Actions outside the premise at Laverton have created an enhanced risk to motorists and the public.

Diamond Valley takes the wellbeing of our employees, contractors and visitors very seriously. Our people have the right to feel safe and free from confrontation and harassment from activists whilst carrying out their day to day, lawful activities.

The Victorian Government can improve protection for our people, business and our surrounding community by:

- Prosecuting animal activists who trespass onto our property imposing significant penalties, including jail time, for those convicted
- Ensuring quick response times from emergency services when illegal trespass activity occurs on our properties or on the adjoining public areas
- Enhancing privacy laws for business operators to deter animal activist organisations from publishing material and to allow prosecution for breaches of privacy
- Considering laws that enforce the removal of illegally obtained footage from online sources
- Ensuring the Victorian Work Health and Safety Act protects processing operators from any subsequent injury/ other liability claims arising from illegal trespass activity
- Ensure that transport drivers can do their jobs without the hindrance of Activist

Yours faithfully

MICK HEWAT
CHAIRMAN

ALAN BITTISNICH
CEO & JOINT OWNER