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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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a) The type and prevalence of unauthorised activity on Victorian farms and related industries, and the application of existing legislation;

I ask the commission to please assure that all facts around the prevalence of unauthorised activity on Victorian farms are considered. For example, how many actual farm rescues have occurred in recent years, what damage and harm actually occurred, compared to how many farms and slaughter yards exist. My concern is that the truth is very much getting lost in the sensationalising we see about a limited number of incidents. Please compare these incidents also to the present spike in stock thefts (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2018-05-21/spike-in-stock-theft-victoria-farmers-want-action-on-rural-crime/9782350>). Does it really add up to create new laws to legislate against one small group of people, when Victoria already has legislation in place that relates to unlawful access to a farm or any private place for that matter.

b) The workplace health and safety and biosecurity risks, and potential impacts of animal activist activity on Victorian farms, to Victoria's economy and international reputation;

This is certainly a matter for concern and needs to be taken very seriously by everyone especially farmers and farm workers who do appear to flout these biosecurity and WHS risks daily. While farm labour only represents 3% of the workforce industry, it is overly represented in regards to farm deaths and injuries. Half of the workplace deaths recorded during 2017-18 were on farms (<https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au>). In regards to bio security, I have seen myself a tractor travel on the same road that hundreds of cattle trucks drive on each week, next to the Huntly agricultural sale yards and then enter a paddock with a large bio security sign on its gate. Stronger measures need to be put in place and resources provided so the community and the broader farming community can operate in confidence that workplace health and safety and biosecurity risks are being taken seriously. To use such concerns to vilify animal activists is most certainly not aligned with the bigger picture, the facts.

c) Animal activists' compliance with the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, Livestock Management Act

2010, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986;

I have not personally witnessed any animal whistle-blowers action, but with the articles I have read I cannot help but notice how much of the time the activists are wearing what appears to be bio security clothing. I recall reading about scenes where the whistle-blowers witness farm workers in thongs shorts and t-shirts while they themselves are in full bio security clothing.

d) The civil or criminal liability of individuals and organisations who promote or organise participation in unauthorised animal activism activities;

All farms are already protected by existing trespass laws, and these laws should be sufficient as they do give the judicial system a number of options in regards to punishment when trespass laws are proven to have been broken. To change by legislation these existing laws over such a small number of incidents concerns me in that it might open up a Pandora's Box of new legislations for a whole host of misdemeanours making the governance of justice even more complicated and convoluted than they are at present.

e) Analyse the incidences and responses of other jurisdictions in Australia and internationally; and provide recommendations on how the Victorian Government and industry could improve protections for farmers' privacy, businesses, and the integrity of our biosecurity system and animal welfare outcomes, whether through law reform or other measures

Internationally we are seeing a strong mind shift towards a better world for animals. It is no longer good enough for farmers to be able to hide behind obscure outdated laws when committing cruelty towards their stock. More education and transparency about what happens on farms I believe has to be integral to any new measures to protect the integrity of farms and similar industries such as slaughter houses. Resources are desperately needed so departmental officers are able to better oversee themselves that proper care for animal welfare is being carried out, and while I know the commission would have heard this suggestion many times, Victoria seriously needs to consider a very broad roll out of CCTV cameras on farms and similar. This to fall in line with other spaces where there are fears innocents are being badly treated such as nursing homes and child welfare spaces. Animals deserve the same protections, regardless of the fact that eventually they will be killed for their bodies. Unfortunately this review does not have listed a consideration, about the actual welfare of animals. I have no doubt if farm animal welfare was taken seriously by government, it would greatly curtail the need for whistle-blowers and animal rescues.

Present legislation only suggests good husbandry practices, for example there is no legislation that says animals should be able to find shade during Australia's extreme heat days, no legislation to say animals should not be transported to abattoirs on days of 40 plus degrees, no legislation to prevent extremely cruel practices such as mulesing without any pain relief. These are very cruel practises, yet there in no law to say this is not to happen.

In 2016, a Productivity Commission report suggested the current process for setting standards for farm animal welfare does not adequately value the benefits of animal welfare to the community.– It suggested the process for setting standards would be improved through the creation of a statutory agency responsible for developing national farm animal welfare standards using rigorous science and evidence of community values for farm animal welfare.

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File1:

File2:

File3: