

**Parliament of Victoria, Australia**

**Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture**

Submission

Thursday, August 1, 2019

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my perspective regarding animal farming and whistle-blowing in Victoria. I am speaking up because I believe that kindness, justice, peace and restoring our planet begins with protecting the most vulnerable among us.

I was previously a sheep farmer, and am now an animal rights humane educator and primary school teacher. Once I learned the undisputable facts about our antiquated, unsustainable global food system, the ill-health implications of eating animal products, and the suffering and cruelty in animal farming, for me it was an easy decision to transition to a plant-based diet.

I want to take this opportunity to ensure that you, the committee members and decision makers, consider the overwhelming evidence that consumers want transparency and animal cruelty addressed, rather than making it harder for whistle-blowers to expose it.

Animal farming whistle-blowers exist solely for the purpose of exposing the secretive, non-transparent inhumane practices that routinely occur on animal farms. Their aim is to uncover the truth for the public to see about how animal products are actually produced. Consumers have the right to know how products they purchase are made, and the bottom-line is, if there was transparency and adequate or existing animal protection in farming production practices, there would be no need for whistle-blowers or investigators.

Regarding public opinion about animal welfare, I would like to draw your attention to a 2019 report titled [Australia's Shifting Mindset on Animal Welfare](#), commissioned by the federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, which suggests that the majority of Australians care about animal welfare. The report found 95% of respondents viewed farm animal welfare with concern and 91% wanted reform to address it.

It is high time that the government and industry acknowledge and act on what most people want regarding animal welfare. Farm animals should not be exempt from laws that protect our companion animals - they have the same needs and desires to live a happy and healthy life.

I have seen this first-hand myself by volunteering at a farm animal sanctuary. I have gotten to know pigs, sheep, cows and chickens – all with unique and endearing personalities, wanting to live their best and longest life, just like my cat and dog at home.

All of us would be horrified, and immediately put a stop to the practice, if a female dog was kept in a breeding shed all her life in a stall where she couldn't even turn around, yet this is legal practice and tragically how most breeding sows live. Pigs, in fact, are more intelligent than dogs. Farmers can also legally cut off a pig or lamb's tail without pain relief, and when they consider an animal, such as a new born male calf, a 'waste product', the law allows them to kill that animal by blunt force trauma.

Thousands of years ago humans domesticated animals for various uses, some for food and fibre, but that time has well and truly passed. In addition to the animal welfare side of things, we're at a crisis point - an animal foods-based diet is one of the biggest contributors to our climate catastrophe, the depletion of aquifers, water pollution, ocean dead zones, deforestation, and soil erosion. (For environmental research details see the book, [Eat for the Planet.](#))

Considering the last **Term of Reference** of this inquiry, I would like to 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.

First and foremost, to address all of the above, I believe the best long-term and overarching action for the Victorian government and industry, and indeed the responsibility of both, is to assist animal farmers in transitioning to alternative forms of farming or other careers. I understand that this will be a long and gradual process.

I know from personal experience that the vast majority of animal farmers are caring people who have simply never considered that farm animals are sentient, and most aren't aware of the urgent and devastating effect of animal farming on the planet or how animal products are linked to ill-health. When you raise animals for a living you have to shut off part of your heart and mind from the reality so that you can get the job done. Most of us do this in our lives in one way or another, until we learn new information, increase our awareness, and decide to change to live more in line with our deepest values.

In the meantime, while we transition away from animal farming, my suggested new laws and reforms to improve farm animal welfare are as follows:

1. Farm animals recognised as sentient, equal to companion animals
2. CCTV mandatory in all slaughterhouses and factory farms
3. Farming codes of practice made mandatory, rather than voluntary
4. Farm animals covered by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act
5. 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, as suggested by a [Productivity Commission report](#) published by the federal Productivity Commission in 2016. It indicates that the current process for setting standards for farm animal welfare does not adequately value the benefits of animal welfare to the community, and that the process for setting standards would be improved through the creation of an agency.

With the above changes in place, the need for animal farming whistle-blowers will be greatly reduced, as would any subsequent impact of whistle-blowers on Victorian agriculture.

Thank you for your thorough examination of this as a top-priority and with a matter of urgency. Ultimately, the well-being and lives of billions of animals, human health, and the planet are at stake.

Kind regards,



Ms. Cori Nelson

