



Australian Livestock Saleyards Association Inc.

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Legislative Council
Economy and Infrastructure Committee

INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISM ON VICTORIAN AGRICULTURE

Dear Sir/Madam,

I'm writing in relation to the above enquiry currently being conducted by the Victorian Parliament. Our organization represents a number of member saleyards located in the south east corner of Australia. This includes members in Victoria, South Australia and southern NSW. The majority of members are council owned and managed saleyards. Saleyards represent a significant component of the red meat marketing chain with billions of dollars transacted nationally on an annual basis.

During recent years a number of our members have had to deal with a range of animal activist activities on their sites. This includes individuals as well as groups. A number of these individuals are frequent repeat offenders. We also have had regular on site contact with groups like Animal Angels. A number of yards have developed local policies to handle these type of events. The more active sites have engaged with their local stakeholders like the Police and Agriculture Victoria to coordinate their responses to these sort of events. The main concern is to minimise any animal welfare, OH&S and personal interaction issues on site and prevent disruption of saleyard activities. Biosecurity concerns will also be a potential issue with activists on site. Currently saleyards are a key link for managing stock traceability and the national NLIS system.

Most of these interactions have been relatively easy to manage for our members too date. A number of these activists are prepared to operate within the current saleyard welfare rules to point out issues that they believe are important, e.g. Pen densities, not fit to sell stock. Generally these parties have not been intrusive to saleyard activities like selling and moving stock at this stage. To date we have not been confronted with the Vegan movement which has been quite active and confrontational in recent times within the broader community.

The interactions too date have indicated a number of issues for our members. These include a lack of understanding about relevant rules/local by laws that apply during these events. The role of other stakeholders like the Police, RSPCA, and Agriculture Victoria is also not clearly enough defined or understood by each respective party. Given this lack of coordination it is likely that a serious incident within saleyards that lead to saleyard disruption, e.g. interfering with the sale process, would not be managed as effectively as possible. These events also

cause unnecessary stress to saleyard staff and the associated stakeholders with the potential for verbal and physical conflict to occur.

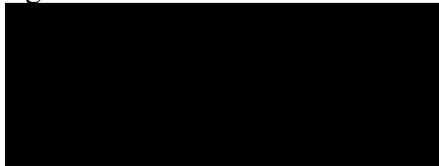
Other issues for our members to consider include the status of the saleyard sites. Many are still open to the public and cannot restrict access in any meaningful way. They are classified as public sites whereas a number of the privately operated saleyards are classified as private sites which brings into play different trespass laws. Most council yards would have difficulty becoming private sites and controlling access. There is also the potential use of induction processing to control access to sites. However, this would not prevent activists from accessing the site as induction could not be denied to these parties in a public site.

In terms of moving forward ALSA would like to see the following actions:

- Tougher rules to apply for trespass on saleyard sites without authorised access,
- Better training and coordination of the relevant industry stakeholders in their rights and roles during these events
- Support for tougher local bylaws to make access to saleyards more difficult for activists.
- Ensuring that the courts provide adequate penalties to activists when charged with any offences related to saleyard disruption.

In summary ALSA believes that we have been fortunate to date in terms of dealing with animal activists on site. However, we do not believe that the current legal and coordination arrangements will suffice with a serious future incident at a saleyard. If you require any further information please contact me.

Rgds



Stuart McLean OAM
Chairman, ALSA