



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

Dear Committee members,

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

I remember the day I started apologising to the food on my plate. The first time it happened, it was chicken. My mind had finally made the connection between the living being that had to be killed and packaged for me to be cutting its breast and use it to make what one could refer to as a chicken sandwich. Having grown up eating meat, I became a vegetarian at 18, over 12 years ago. For a while, I continued to consume animal by-products which I believed were more ethical. However, thanks to a pamphlet given to me on the street, a few enlightening books, and most importantly a documentary called Earthlings, I quickly became aware that for me to live what I perceived to be a life that is hopefully harmless to other living beings, I had to change the way I consume both food and other products including but not limited to my clothing, accessories, skincare, haircare and cosmetics. Thanks to the undercover work of the filmmaker Shaun Monson, I now had seen what couldn't be seen, the truths that the animal agriculture industries are wanting to keep hidden, for fear that this billion dollar machine might suffer to the hand of consumers wanting if not the complete elimination of the use of animals for human purposes, than the greatest reduction of the harm inflicted on nonhuman animals. I for one welcome this inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture as I believe Animal Rights whistle-blowers and rescuers are the true heroes of our times, risking their personal wellbeing to raise awareness and help those of our society that are the most vulnerable, the ones that cannot speak for themselves.

In recent history, social justice movements have been instigated by progressive thinkers that are first seen as foolish and a threat to the status quo. The abolition of slavery, the rights of women to vote, own land and choose when to or not to have children, freedom of religion and equal marrying rights are all liberties we have come to accept as what a just society should be thriving towards. Still today, funds are continuously being used to increase the chances of equality both internationally and here in Australia, by either bringing education to underdeveloped countries or encouraging young girls to pursue careers or interests traditionally dominated by men including engineering, technology, sciences and good old Australian Football. Unfortunately, the equality currently stops at what we as a specie recognise as our own, human beings. Animals, who share the rights to this planet with us, have become a resource, something one can own and choose to use for scientific experimentation, economic gain, or pretty much anything they see fit if that animal is not a cat or a dog as farmed animals are exempt from the laws that protect their domestic counterparts.

For some time, the Australian animal agriculture industry dissociated itself from Animal Rights documentaries as they were mostly exposing international practices, mainly from the United States of America. That had to change in 2018 with the release of the documentary Dominion, in which hidden cameras and aerial drones were used to investigate and demonstrate the practices of the Australian animal agriculture industry. But this wasn't the first time that whistle-blowers were raising awareness around the treatment and fate of Australian animals. In the early 2000s, renowned animal rights organisation PETA was instrumental in exposing the practices around sheep farming for both the wool and meat industry (both onshore processing and live export). Their undercover footage resulted in worldwide awareness around the distress and violence experienced by sheep in shearing as well as the practice of mulesing ([please watch the undercover and public PETA video attached to this submission.](#)) Other practices being brought to light by important organisations based in the state of Victoria like Animals Australia, Animal Liberation Victoria, Melbourne Pig Save, the Coalition against Horse Racing and the Coalition Against Duck Shooting include the shooting of protected duck species in Victorian wetlands, the

horrendous final moments of horses being sent to knackeries in the outer suburbs of Melbourne ([please watch the public video of a Laverton knackery attached to this submission](#)), the sow stalls that confine pigs where they have no capacity to express their innate behaviour, the suffocation and shredding of male chicks and the mass destruction and disposal of spent hens in the egg industry, the calves being taken away and starved while awaiting their slaughter and whose mothers are chained to machines taking their milk, and the shame of live export ([please watch the public video on live export attached to this submission](#)). These practices are inhumane and only brought to light by brave individuals, Australians, taxpayers, members of the public, voters, people that live here, that work here, that were raised here. Their voices and their opinion matter as much, if not more, as the opinion of people who benefit from the institutionalisation and continuous stifling of their industry's practices. For these practices to be brought to light, they unfortunately had to go on what is considered "private" property. However, if a child was being harmed, if a dog was being sledgehammered, the public would rally behind those who decide to do what's right and save the ones being harmed. Why the dissonance? Why protect and encourage one, and demonise the other?

Whistle-blowers and rescuers don't do this important work to damage the economy, or hurt families. They do it because they know that we as people need to do better. In 1789 author Jeremy Bentham wrote "The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" In 2019, the question cannot be "do they suffer?" as animal sentience has been proven time and time again. Therefore, those who are taking it upon themselves to raise and care for animals should be scrutinised as they are handling breathing, living, sentient beings. Financial gains and economic benefits shouldn't be used as an excuse to inflict pain and distress to animals. This is why, as residents and representatives of the state of Victoria, and members of this committee, you need to recognise that your constituents, your neighbours, your colleagues, care about the lives and wellbeing of animals. And that the only way forward is in an increase in transparency surrounding animal agriculture practices, and the establishment of stronger laws and penalties for those who cause harm and distress to all animals, including the ones who are farmed. Suggestions include mandatory cameras in any and all breeding operations and farms as well as all slaughterhouses with footage available to the public, and for all animals including farmed animals to be covered by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Harsher laws for the people trying to inform the public on where their food comes from is not what our dying planet needs and shouldn't be considered by the state of Victoria.

Additionally, it could be beneficial to give access to services to farmers wanting to transition away from animal agriculture which would include soil analysis, business strategies and grants for other types of farming.

I thank you for your time and consideration,

Rachel Beauchesne