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

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**SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

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Introduction

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge the following submission into the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian agriculture. This is my first submission to a Parliamentary Inquiry; it reflects the importance I place on the Inquiry and the opportunity Victorians have to participate in a process of improving animal welfare in a respectful, non-divisive manner. Respectfully I acknowledge the work of animal rights activists who have peacefully witnessed, uncovered and disclosed The Truth about many disturbing aspects of animal agriculture. The following submission considers Terms of Reference provided by the Legislative Council.

Summary of key points

1. Evidence tells us that animals are sentient, experience a range of emotions and have complex social networks.
2. Victoria's Animal Welfare Plan promotes evidence-based practice to reflect community expectations. All Victorians need to protect animals from cruelty and support their quality of lives in our homes, on farms and in natural environments (2).
3. The principle of sentience, incorporated into Lisbon Treaty Article 13 (2007) provides full regard to the welfare requirement of animals when formulating policies in certain areas "since animals are sentient beings" (3).
4. Animals have emotional lives, they can suffer deeply; if we continue to use them for food and in research we need to recognize this well-supported fact and do as much as possible to alleviate their pain and suffering (4).
5. Increased expectations on the sentience, capabilities and rights of animals are impacting expectations on the perceived effectiveness of regulation and levels of transparency in relation to animal welfare (1).
6. A majority (95%) of Australians are concerned about treatment of farm animals and consider farm animal welfare in Australia to be an issue...community distrust of the industry, government, and the perceived lack of transparency is driving outrage on farm animal welfare (1).
7. 95% of Australians are concerned about animal welfare while there are clear

expectations that there is a need for a reform of the current regulatory system (1).

8. When all animal agriculture industries comply with Acts under the prevention of cruelty towards animal legislation there would be NO need for activists to fulfill a function which the government has repeatedly failed to carry out.

#### Preamble

I am optimistic the outcome of this Inquiry will not only improve animal welfare in Victoria, but also introduce relevant key recommendations to eliminate the need by concerned people to risk their own health and safety when exposing THE TRUTH behind animal agriculture. I am hopeful this enquiry will lead to a thorough examination of the animal agriculture industry to eliminate animal cruelty and to implement appropriate law reform.

In order to prevent and deter activities by unauthorised persons, one must ask the question WHY these activities happen. Before bringing down recommendations from this Public Inquiry, may I recommend that each Committee Member prioritise the need to:

1. Visit an abattoir for a day to witness the entire process, from animals being unloaded through to the slaughter and process chain – this will enable you to witness the animals screaming, the look of panic and dread in their eyes before and during their slaughter. You will also have a firsthand account of the gross inhumanities that slaughter house workers have to endure.
2. Witness how animals are carted to the abattoirs, do they need water/shelter? How long are they on the truck, the temperature (considering pigs have difficulty lowering their temperature).
3. Examine the health and safety of the entire process chain and that of the workers.
4. Visit a piggery, high density poultry breeding farm, and a high density feedlot.
5. Discuss the measures in place to manage animal welfare.

The aim of animal rights activism is to bring awareness of the cruelty involved in businesses which exploit animals for profit, be they agricultural, entertainment, clothing or testing facilities. Only by raising awareness will the public learn the truth of the horrors inflicted on animals. Most Victorians have heard about cruel and inhumane conditions and death in which animals go to their deaths.; they may be familiar with the atrocities of live export trade, male chicks being ground up alive in macerators, greyhounds shot post-racing, industry standard practice of pigs killed in gas chambers; all of these things exposed by animal rights activists in Victoria. Animal rights activism is peaceful, promoting compassion to all beings. There are no substantiated reports of farmers or families being victims of violence from activists.

We all have a moral obligation to end the completely unnecessary suffering of animals and animal rights activists are seeking to achieve this by bringing light to the darkness of animal agriculture. I am unaware of evidence where activists have harmed an animal, caused a disease outbreak, caused significant loss of income to anyone engaged in animal agriculture. There is no record of animal activists inflicting injury, harm or home invasion directed to farmers. Animal activists receive no personal gain nor promotions from exposing deficiencies in Aust animal protection legislation and cruel animal practices, they only highlight these deficiencies. There is no danger towards farmers, it is not in the animal activist's interest. Animal activists groups promote non-violence. There is no evidence to support farmers are in any danger from animal activists.

Why do whistle blowers about the agriculture industry, or animal rescuers, take the actions that are now the subject of this parliamentary inquiry? Without footage from hidden cameras and people taking video of unacceptable practices on farms, the atrocities in factory farming and live export, using animals as live bait in the greyhound industry and cruelty in abattoirs would never have come to light. There is a lack of transparency about

the conditions in which these animals live. There is also a great deal of misleading and deceptive advertising depicting pictures of cows and sheep in beautiful sunshine and green pastures. No pictures of the estimated 15 million lambs that die each year from exposure, starvation and birthing problems. No pictures of animals with no access to shade in temperatures of over 40 degrees. Thousands of people protested about animal cruelty in Melbourne in 2018 but this did not even rate a mention in the media. Those concerned about animal welfare had to take more dramatic action to gain attention to gross animal cruelty and the virtual imprisonment of animals in factory farms for example. Pigs held in stalls where they cannot even turn around, chickens in cages so small they cannot extend their wings. Do we as a society actually think it is OK for pigs to die thrashing to death in gas chambers, for animals to have their testicles, tails, teeth and beaks cut off without anaesthetic, and for calves to be removed from their mothers who can bellow for their babies for days? Those same calves who can be transported to abattoirs and be given no food or water for 36 hours and that is deemed lawful!

It is discriminatory to allow one type of protest and not another. At the time of the Dominion anniversary protest, union rallies shut down central Melbourne demanding industrial law changes. Our Premier, Daniel Andrews, attended without criticism. We cannot have a law for one type of action and not another. We do not need Ag Gag laws which penalise people who expose cruelty and protect the perpetrators of that cruelty.. Victorians have a right to know.

Considering Terms of Reference

a. the type and prevalence of unauthorised activity on Victorian farms and related industries, and the application of existing legislation:

1. The reporting of unauthorised activity on Victorian farms and related industry suggests animal rights activists demonstrate deep concern for the welfare of animals. These concerns reflect community expectations. Data available to the community suggests that reports of animal rights activist undertaking acts of violence, home invasion, threats or theft are erroneous.
2. Media reporting of unauthorised peaceful activity, for example, in the area where I live my family learnt about the sadistic cruelty at Bridgewater Poultry Farm from Whistleblowers, reported public outrage at the torture of hens disclosed by animal activists in a peaceful manner.
3. All animal rights activism, authorised or unauthorised, exposes cruel practices that do not adhere to industry standards and educates Victorians about animal mistreatment on farms and related industries. Currently there are no other forms of education about animal agriculture practices for the Victorians that are reflective of the truth and independent of economic bias.
4. Whistleblowers are a vital cog in every community; they represent those of us who are unable to 'do or say' and expose and disclose the truth behind great injustice.
5. Without a relevant accessible Data Base for Victorians, it is impossible to interpret, the effectiveness of the application of existing legislation; however, unauthorised access to any property is illegal and the law does not need to change in that respect. Freedom of speech is inherent in our democracy and the law needs to protect animal rights activists when disclosing animal cruelty under the Act.

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:

1. The health and safety of slaughterhouse workers, including PTSD and psychological issues, needs to be investigated, monitored and protected under relevant legislation.
2. There is no evidence-based research or data suggesting that animal rights activists cause, or have caused, biosecurity threats.
3. The biosecurity risks that already occur in animal agriculture generally arise from overcrowding, cross-contamination, substandard conditions, breach of infection control (bird flu, egg contamination, swine flu. Animal rights activists usually wear protective gear and do not travel from area to area to reduce risk.

4. Australia has an opportunity to be a global leader by enshrining the protection and care of ALL animals within best-practice animal welfare legislation. Economical reputation will follow when farmers are given legislative support to transition from intensive animal farming to sustainable cropping.

c. animal activists' compliance with the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, Livestock Management Act 2010, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986;

1. Animal rights activist footage reveals that the animal industry does not adhere to these Acts and are in gross breach on articles contained under the Acts (5).

2. The Acts above need to be extended to include ALL animals and not solely domestic animals.

3. Animal activists' compliance with the Acts above is inferred by: a) the nature of animal activism is inherently non-violent and peaceful), and b) the ethical behaviour of non-violent activism aims to prevent cruelty to All animals and promote their wellbeing and care.

d. the civil or criminal liability of individuals and organisations who promote or organise participation in unauthorised animal activism activities

1. Mandatory multipurpose CCTV monitoring and establishment of an independent Australian Commission for Animal Welfare (6) to monitor and enforce compliance is essential for ALL animal industries, slaughter houses, livestock exchanges and intensive large scale feed-lots. These measures would eliminate the need for community activity in such facilities.

e. analyse the incidences and responses of other jurisdictions in Australia and internationally;

1. There is a growing global movement of intense concern for the welfare of ALL animals.

2. An arm's length, independent Australian Commission of Animal Welfare needs to be established to gather and analyse local and global responses.

3. Climate change and environmental degradation is threatening the planet. Animal agriculture is the biggest contributor to environmental damage; moving to plant based agriculture should be implemented immediately to avoid ongoing environmental disaster, i.e. Murray Darling Basin.

f. 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.,

1. Transparent and accountable animal agriculture industry practice regarding animal welfare and food production, in the law, is essential.

2. Stricter penalties and enforcement for those who harm animals, regardless of species.

3. A gradual phase out of these industries and greater financial incentives for a shift to more ethical, healthier and environmentally sound practices.

4. Laws to protect whistle blowers in all industries including animal agriculture.

5. Establish an Independent Office of Animal Welfare as recommended by the Australian Productivity Commission (2016). To avoid conflict of interest the Minister for Agriculture, Federal and State, should not be responsible for the portfolios of both the animal agricultural industry as well as animal welfare standards and practices (the RSPCA is seriously underfunded and unable to carry out their duty in the prevention of cruelty towards animals).

6. CCTV in all slaughterhouses and the discontinuance of horrific cultural killing practices on religious grounds.

7. Codes of practice which protect farm animals in a comparable manner to companion animals and which will punish offenders.

8. Factory farmed animals are not represented in the RSPCA statistics on animal cruelty, because Victoria allows inhumane treatment of animals as long as it is for commercial purposes.

9. Support farmers to transition into non animal agriculture up-skilling of farmers to

become financially viable in other areas of farming. Growing hemp, wind farms, solar farms, eco-tourism to support farmers transitioning from animal agriculture to financially viable long term sustainable alternative.

10. Victoria's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 6 (1) states that the Act does not apply to: "Any act or practice with respect to the farming, transport, sale or killing of any farm animal which is carried out in accordance with a Code of Practice." Nor does the Act apply to: "... the keeping, treatment, handling, transportation, sale, killing, hunting, shooting, catching, trapping, netting, marking, care, use, husbandry or management of any animal or class of animals ... which is carried out in accordance with a Code of Practice". This means that millions of farm animals daily endure housing conditions and acts of cruelty that would be illegal for a cat or dog. The codes of practice are policy documents endorsed by a Minister, and are not subject to a democratic vote within Parliament, unless a motion is put for their disallowance. Legislative change is indicated.

11. Provide education and training for ALL farmers, ag-industry workers and management about how to effectively manage on-site bio-security and animal welfare.

#### Conclusion

Thank you for considering my views and public expectations. Victorians have the right to know The Truth behind animal rights activism in Victorian agriculture and the right to place trust in reform of our current regulatory system that, in the law, protects animals, activists and farmers alike.

#### References

1. Australia's Shifting Mindset on Farm Animal Welfare. Futureye Pty Ltd . ACN 081 569. 66 Punt Road, Windsor, Victoria 3181. 2018
2. Animal Welfare Action Plan: Improving the Welfare of Animals in Victoria. State of Victoria. December 2017
3. Animal Sentience and Brexit. House of Commons Library. Number 8155. 8 July 2019
4. Updating Animal Welfare Thinking: Moving beyond the "Five Freedoms" towards "A Life Worth Living. Dr. David Mellor. Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics Centre – Massey University, New Zealand
5. Documentary Dominion filmed by animal rights activists in animal agriculture settings and footage provided on the Aussie Farms Repository.
6. Regulation of Australian Agriculture. Productivity Commission Inquiry Report Overview & Recommendations. 2016

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File1:

File2:

File3: