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

Mr. Stephen Bacon

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Inquiry Into The Impact of Animal Right Activism on Victorian Agriculture

Submission

The recent rise in the number of whistleblowers in the animal agriculture industry is a direct consequence of the rise of social media. The general public is now aware of the cruelty involved in the meat, livestock, egg and dairy industries and there is no way to put that Jeanie back in the bottle.

Tougher penalties will not deter whistleblowers from exposing the truth, it will only force them to go underground. If the animal agriculture industry is concerned about its image it should be more truthful about its farming practices. (eg. macerating live day old chicks and bludgeoning bobby calves at a few days old and the long list of atrocities that go on at Australian farms and slaughterhouses every day). The days of feeding the public the image of happy farm animals living in some Disneyesque Utopia are well and truly gone, so the animal agriculture industry must be more transparent about their trade and the animals they say they love. The whistleblower is not a spin doctor, he doesn't meddle with the truth, he is just conveying the truth to the public who have every right to know what their money is supporting.

The false news from some commentators, that animal rescuers are going into farmers homes is distressing for the public, the rescuers and for farmers alike. As far as I am aware no rescuer has ever gone near a farmers house, it is a gross exaggeration from the media shock jocks and some farmers. Rescuers are not interested in farm houses or the people in them, they are only interested in the animals, and stopping the cruelty. There are already adequate laws that cover trespass in Victoria, so there is no need to review the existing legislation.

Workplace health and safety and biosecurity concerns seem a little out of place, when piles of excrement and dead chickens can be seen under battery hen cages on video footage

we've all seen. Just today on the ABC site there is a report of numerous biosecurity breaches at an illegal abattoir operating on the outskirts of Melbourne. Graphic footage was received of sheep being slaughtered without being stunned. Without the work of whistleblowers these illegal atrocities would not come to light and the perpetrators would not be prosecuted.

One of the first steps towards transparency would be the mandatory installation of CCTV cameras on all farms and slaughterhouses. The footage should be held at a central data base for at least 30 days, and be monitored by an independent body.

Victoria's economy could only benefit from a more transparent and regulated animal agriculture industry. The general public will always be buying food, its just a matter of what food they buy. They should be the ones to decide with the full knowledge of where their food comes from. New industries will evolve and thrive, the economy will benefit and our international reputation will receive a much needed boost.

In closing I would like to say that an Independent Office of Animal Welfare is urgently required. Farm animals should have rights, as it stands they have none. Their sentience should be recognised and factory farms should be abolished. Animal cruelty claims should be vigorously investigated by the Independent Office of Animal Welfare.

Sincerely Stephen Bacon

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File2:

File3: