“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest”

- Elie Wiesel

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture.

This submission is limited to general comments on the issues referenced by the Inquiry, unless otherwise specified.

Standing inside a factory farm next to a mother pig chewing on a metal bar imprisoning her, with one hundred other whistle-blowers participating in an action of civil disobedience, knowing that I am breaking the law is not something I enjoy or look forward to doing.

Despite providing undercover graphic footage of pigs at this facility being violently bludgeoned to death or having their tails cut with no anaesthetic, to the RSPCA and police, no further prosecution or investigation was conducted by any authoritative body. Business continues as usual at this facility, with no changes enforced whatsoever.

Footage: https://vimeo.com/299571638

Whilst the media will label me as a ‘militant vegan’ or a ‘domestic terrorist’, the reality is that I am a non-violent member of society, that has witnessed unnecessary animal cruelty and I simply want to bring an end to the suffering and exploitation.

To bring an end to this, I and other whistle-blowers employ a strategic method of social change, known as civil disobedience.
civil disobedience

noun
the refusal to comply with certain laws considered unjust, as a peaceful form of political protest.

Throughout history, civil disobedience is an absolute necessity to creating change in any society. We have seen an increased frequency of such activities due to the rise of younger individuals understanding the necessity of immediate action for important social justice issues.

After all, despite the positive and negative media attention that has been generated, it is indeed these actions and investigations that have brought this Inquiry to life, which has provided whistle-blowers with the platform to engage with the Committee.

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;

It is important to note first and foremost, that there has not been a single instance of violence perpetrated by activists participating in such actions and investigations. As whistle-blowers, our intention is to expose the truth of what is happening behind closed doors.

The reality is that no biosecurity breach has ever occurred due to whistle-blower activity. During investigations, we have seen feral cats, farmer’s dogs, flies, cockroaches and mice roaming these farms. One particular instance, it was observed that a feral cat was eating the corpse of a sick, dead piglet. Just metres away, a mother pig was also consuming a dead piglet.

I do not claim to be trained in understanding or interpreting the aforementioned laws, but I can comment on the biosecurity measures undertaken by whistle-blowers participating in such actions and investigations.

Activists employ considerable methods to prevent any potential transmission of disease to and from livestock including but not limited to: overalls, shoe covers, sanitisation of shoes, facemasks, and gloves. This can be observed in recent civil disobedience actions conducted throughout Victoria (and Australia).

On this consideration, I ask the Committee – Why are animals that we eat (such as cows, pigs, chicken and sheep) condemned to a life of suffering and death, whilst other animals (dogs & cats) are loved, cared for and protected in our homes?

All aforementioned animals are sentient, intelligent and experience pain – what is the reason for this double standard?

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

Previous work of whistle-blowers have resulted in two piggeries being exposed and consequently shut down: 


Following this, the corporate industry regulatory body Australian Pork Limited have gone as far as attempting to shut down the whistle-blower website that posted photos and videos of the farms under their representation: https://www.aussiepigs.com/news/11-pork-industry-tries-shut-down-whistleblower-website-as-another-piggery-exposed

If we allow such corporations and businesses to have the power to silence whistle-blowers, rather than focus on the issue at hand (the animal abuse), we have failed as a fair and just society.
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.

The supposed claim that whistle-blowers will physically harm farmers is unfounded and merely a grasp at straws by the industry to coerce the public into believing the farmers’ safety is at risk. There have been no instances of whistle-blowers ever entering a farmers’ private residence or invading their privacy.

Whilst their business may be disrupted by these actions or investigations, it is important to note that this disruption is a direct result of the violent and cruel business practices that they are committing. As aforementioned, civil disobedience will be disruptive, albeit necessary.

The reality is that the current authoritative bodies such as the RSPCA do not adequately prosecute facilities that have been documented to commit animal abuse. No instances of prosecution have occurred from whistleblower’s releasing the footage. The RSPCA are also a business that profit off accreditation provided to farms. At one particular free-range chicken (broiler) farm in Victoria, you can see the birds are sick and diseased with multiple dead rotting carcasses found in the shed. This is common regardless of species or type of farm.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to consider the implementation of an independent body with authoritative powers to monitor and investigate animal abuse cases in farms and slaughterhouses.

For any commercial operation of slaughter – mandate the necessary installation of real time CCTV which is available to the aforementioned independent body. This will improve efficiency of inspections for the regulatory body whilst monitoring the slaughter occurring.
The unfortunate reality is that these animals will continue to suffer tremendously due to economic interests and human greed. The abuse, torture and violence that we inflict upon animals when we allow these practices to go unquestioned behind closed walls is abhorrent. It is solely the whistle-blowers working tirelessly and selflessly that have brought these issues to the surface, and without their work, we are creating an unjust society that turns a blind eye to the animal abuse occurring across our state.

Watch the documentary Dominion available free [https://www.dominionmovement.com/watch](https://www.dominionmovement.com/watch) to see for yourself what is occurring in farms and slaughterhouses all over Victoria (and Australia).

I encourage you to visit Edgar’s Mission, a farm animal sanctuary located in Lancefield just 80km from Melbourne, where you will have the opportunity to meet animals that you would traditionally view as food: [https://www.edgarsmission.org.au/](https://www.edgarsmission.org.au/)

I thank the Committee for their time and work into this issue and Inquiry.