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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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Please look at the root cause of why there unauthorised activity on Victorian farms and related industries. This is, in my view, very much a "shoot the messenger" focus. People are curious about these facilities because they are not transparent; people's expectations of farms vs the reality of industrialised farming are world apart due to misinformation and marketing. The animal agriculture industries hide what we have seen over the years to be horrible abuses, such as baby male chicks being ground up, pigs being gassed, chickens boiled alive. It is sickening truth and it can occur because of the secrecy in which these operations already operate. These are not cosy family farms but large scale industrialised facilities that have track records for animal abuse and who get away with it because there is insufficient protections for animals deemed to be agricultural commodities.

- WHS/biosecurity:

I have seen footage from facilities that absolutely raise WHS and biosecurity concerns. Animals covered in, and surrounded by, their own filth and dead bodies around them - probably the most publicised of these are the live export ships. However, I have also seen footage of intensive chicken farms look as grim, with ill and dead birds crammed into dark, dirty sheds. There may be a risk to concerned citizens entering these facilities. If there were more regular inspections and genuine enforcement activity around adequate management of these facilities then there would be less risk to humans. People are so concerned about animal welfare and rights they are willing to take the risk when they enter. It's the animals' welfare that is the priority for them; but often not the "farmers" who have already factored in wastage in their costs. Again, animals are seen just as commodities when they are actually sentient beings who feel pain, fear, joy and there is a wealth of evidence to support this fact. I find it disappointing that activists compliance with Acts is in the term of reference - just highlights that the context here is about protecting farmers revenue and assets by ensuring minimum losses instead of the actual issue which I see to be about animal welfare.

- Whistleblowers promoting further whistleblowing

These investigators seek the truth only, they do not wish harm the animals. Why does there

need to be a special category for them. Unlawful entry already exists; there are related provisions in the law for these circumstances. Again we'd be best to focus on the concerns of the animal requirers and whistleblowers. Perhaps with mandatory CCTV in all animal processing facilities, we can avoid the need for the curious to attempt to physically enter.

I believe the industry could improve the integrity of our biosecurity system and animal welfare outcomes by the following:

- CCTV in all abattoirs, animal processing facilities, indoor and outdoor farms - lessening the need for physical presence to observe operations
- independent animal welfare office who have no connection to the animal agriculture industry nor the department for agriculture. The office will be adequately resourced to represent the welfare and rights of all animals, including farmed animals, who have a footprint in the State.
- extensive laws that cover the welfare of farm animals give they are exempt from the laws that protect our domestic animals - yet farm animals are, like our pet cats and dogs, sentiment creatures who are intelligent and vulnerable. They perform the ultimate sacrifice of having their life ultimately taken by the industry; and we afford them so little protection during their short lives. As a minimum, farmed animals should be covered under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

Abolishment of a range of cruel farming methods:

- abolish museling of sheep without pain relief.
- abolish battery cage farming of birds (free range egg producing chickens only, 1500 hens per acre with access to the outdoors including sun and shade)
- abolish tail docking in pigs which may cause nerve damage (improve conditions for pigs so they do not bite one another)
- abolish live export - so little confidence that any welfare standards would suffice.
- abolish sow stalls, as the UK did back in 1999. A small concete box for a pregnant pig/mother pig is not natural.

If this State changes the laws to stop animal cruelty in farming and the whistleblowers will have less to be concerned about - it's simple. Then let the industry be creative to find alternatives to so many cruel practices that the majority of Australians want put behind us.

Thank you.



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File1:

File2:

File3: