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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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Animal Liberation Victoria has carried out several hundred investigations and rescues at animal agriculture facilities since the early 1990s. We pioneered a form of rescue now known internationally as “open rescue” which is practiced widely on several continents.

Our open rescue workers vowed non violence and always openly identified themselves, working as professionally and diligently as those in other rescue areas such as firefighters, State Emergency Services and ambulance personnel. Unfortunately, until the rights of non-human animals are universally accepted it has been necessary to sometimes trespass to perform this life-saving rescue work.

Open rescues and investigations are based on the moral premise that it is wrong to knowingly let any individual, regardless of their species, suffer and die because they are being neglected, abused and mistreated by animal producers. Open rescue is strictly non violent and any participants must adhere to this principle at all times. The immediate aims of open rescue are to save lives and to document the unethical conditions forced upon literally billions of animals.

It is important to state that initially, and for over 20 years, we reported clear evidence of animal cruelty to the RSPCA, the POCTAA authorised authority at the time. These reports were ignored, demonstrating the failure of the RSPCA to take appropriate action. The RSPCA are no longer the responsible party regarding farmed animal matters.

Our rescue teams have never approached areas where animal producers, their families, or their employees live, and in our experience residences have either been a significant distance from where animals are confined (usually in the hundreds of thousands inside industrial sheds), or more typically, not on the same property.

During open rescues we have made sure to follow strict biosecurity protocols which include the wearing of clean clothes, biosecurity clothing (including disposable cover-alls, masks, gloves and booties), and shoes dipped in disinfectant outside the building we enter.

On every rescue and investigation we have documented animal exploitation and abuse that would have otherwise gone unchecked. Our rescue teams have ensured countless animals received emergency veterinary care who would have otherwise suffered painful and prolonged deaths. We have on numerous occasions called police to properties we have visited, requesting their assistance.

On one occasion the police have been so disturbed by what they saw that they helped us rescue animals and take them to veterinary care. The following is an account of this incident:

On March 4, 2005 our rescue and investigation team attended at Parkhurst Broiler Farm near Werribee. By 11.15pm that night we had collected over 120 dead birds and 52 ill, crippled, and/or frail chicks who were unable to move properly and access water outlets. Some of these chicks suffered wounds and were bleeding.

Due to the enormity of the situation and the large numbers of birds needing assistance we rang the Werribee Police for help. This was around 11:30 pm. Sergeant Brien took the call, he was very helpful and said he would contact the RSPCA as well as come to the property himself. Sergeant Brien attended with two other officers. He carried out an investigation of the property and sheds. He was distressed at the condition of the birds and took photographs. Sergeant Brien organised for us to take the birds to the Werribee Veterinary Clinic and allowed us to drive our vehicles onto the property to park within meters of the door to the shed. The birds were wrapped in a warm blanket and carried the three-meter distance to the heated car and taken directly to the Vet Clinic.

Without the peaceful actions of our rescue and investigation team that night, and without the subsequent support of the police, these animals would have continued to suffer and die horrifically.

We have over 25 years of documented photographic and video evidence of our non-violent and peaceful open rescues at Australian animal production facilities that we are able to bring before the Committee if members so desire.

When we have taken evidence of animal exploitation and abuse gathered during our investigations to the authorities, we have rarely been taken to court. When we have been charged, the Courts, in considering the moral reasoning behind our actions, have not been inclined to view our actions harshly. An example of this is when ALV members were charged with burglary, criminal damage, theft and trespass in 2016 for their part in rescuing and providing veterinary treatment to sick and dying hens at an egg factory near Melbourne. They were found not guilty of the first charges, and guilty only of theft and trespass - but with NO convictions recorded and a 6 month good behaviour bond in one instance, and a small fine in another. The magistrate stated in his verdict that the “defendants were motivated to help animals who could not help themselves.”

Some examples of recent investigations which have uncovered animal abuse include:

alv.org.au/the-horrific-conditions-inside-an-australian-poultry-farm-revealed/

alv.org.au/horrific-video-shows-pigs-being-forced-into-small-cages-with-tasers-before-they-are-lowered-into-gas-chambers-and-killed/

In summary, without the actions of investigators, whistleblowers, and rescuers peacefully taking action to help animals, horrific and systemic animal abuse would be allowed to continue unchecked.

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File1:

File2:

File3: