

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

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
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To the Parliamentary Committee regarding the Criminal Code Amendment (Agricultural Protection) Bill 2019 [Provisions]

I am writing to express my absolute opposition to all proposed amendments to the code. Any reactionary retaliation reflected in any proposed amendments, based on animal rights activism, is unjust. Trespass onto private property is already criminalised by state and territory legislation and this will suffice.

Introducing the amendments would render the proposed penalties similar to the Criminal Code for offences such as assault, domestic violence, kidnapping and serious animal cruelty.

Responding from the point of view of a member of the public who believes injustices should be addressed, particularly those committed on our animals, whether domestic or farmed, I believe animal activists do not have an intent to cause economic loss to another person or the State. This is a perception by parties that are sidestepping the objectives of animal activists. This renders the proposed amendment somewhat biased and not based on anything resembling rational law and its pure objectives.

The media have been caught up in the recurring confected statement made by farmers and the misinformed public that “farmers are frightened for their lives and the lives of their families.” This could not be further

from the truth. To date, there have been no recorded circumstances where activists have gone anywhere near the private homes of farmers. This is a blatant lie that seeks to deliberately mislead the public.

Activists and whistleblowers have never intended to incite violence. They do not want to break laws. They only intend to expose the hidden atrocities involved in the treatment of animals within these factory farms (always set a vast distance away from any 'family home'). There have been no recorded incidents of activists behaving in a violent manner (although the same cannot be said for farmers). As mentioned in Andy Meddick's parliamentary speech where he debated the inquiry: "the sexism and misogyny that comes from the mouths of the supporters of these industries is reprehensible." Threats of violence abide on the side of the farmers.

To date there have only been a handful of events, Australia-wide, where activists and whistleblowers have trespassed onto private property. The media storm would have the public believe otherwise. Existing legislation is sufficient as it is, without the need for inflated penalties that rather reflect reactionary laws as opposed to any rational law. Using hyped up public opinion to pass laws is also the best camouflage for dangerous and insidious laws to creep in to other areas.

Talk involving biosecurity is another confected threat. There are no incidents of animal activists causing biosecurity risks in Australia. There are, though, many incidents of disease outbreaks caused by intensive animal agriculture. The factory farms that animal activists and whistleblowers are exposing are breeding grounds for microbial resistance in themselves. They are plagued by rats and mice, maggots, birds, feral cats, and every other disease vector imaginable, most feeding on rotting carcasses. No recorded problems with biosecurity have ever been related to animal activists. Animal activists, wearing bio-secure clothing, have also always complied with the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, Livestock Management Act 2010, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. The same cannot be said for farmers and their workers. There are incredibly few regulatory systems in place to ensure current welfare conditions are not breached by animal ag farmers. Concerned citizens have instead been driven to expose the breaching of animal and agricultural welfare conditions. If these were properly regulated, the animal activists' need to trespass would no longer exist. Animal protection is not currently guaranteed by current laws. Internationally CCTV cameras are now compulsory within slaughterhouses in England, Scotland and France. If we followed suit there would be no need for animal activists to exist.

Activists in situations of trespass exclusively intend to shed light upon current injustices within factory farms that do not abide by animal welfare law. The focus should instead be redirected onto the farmers and/or workers that are not abiding by the law under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. Activists aim to expose duty of care breaches against the following points:

1. providing food and water
2. providing accommodation or living conditions
3. understanding your animal's normal behavioural patterns
4. treating disease and injury
5. handling the animal appropriately.

That is the extent of the intention. There is no intention to cause economic loss to another person or the State. I have seen no recorded incident that an animal rights organisation claims to have had this aim.

In summary I am against these amendments for the following reasons:

It seeks to criminalise activists and whistleblowers acting on their moral compass to help others from violence while protecting the perpetrators of this violence.

It is using biosecurity as a reason to attack activists whilst we know this is a confected threat.

There have been only a handful of events where activists have trespassed onto private land, not the numerous occurrences of 'terrorism' that have been concocted. No act of violence by an activist toward a farmer has ever been recorded. Using hyped up, misinformed public opinion to pass laws is reactionary. It is also the best camouflage for dangerous and insidious laws to creep in to other areas.

Use of CCTV footage should be installed in all factory farms first. The stakeholders in this motion are the public. They want to know how animals are treated and they have a right to.

Yours Sincerely,

Sarah Cutting

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File1:

File2:

File3: