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From: Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture
Sent: Thursday, 27 June 2019 5:33 PM
To: aglawsinquiry
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture

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

Mrs Ruth Weston

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I would like to address item (f) of the terms of reference in regards to animal welfare.

Can we ask ourselves the question; why do whistle blowers about the agriculture industry, or animal rescuers, take the actions that are now the subject of this parliamentary inquiry?

Without footage from hidden cameras and people taking video of unacceptable practices on farms, the atrocities in factory farming and live export, using animals as live bait in the greyhound industry and cruelty in abattoirs would never have come to light. Caring people are acting on the courage of their convictions. Significant social change has not happened without activism , for example, the anti- slavery and apartheid movements.

The public have a right to know how the food that they eat is produced. Presumably most people do not want this to involve cruelty or the severe confinement of animals which has been shown to be standard practice in intensive animal agriculture. There is a lack of transparency about the conditions in which these animals live. There is also a great deal of misleading and deceptive advertising depicting pictures of cows and sheep in beautiful sunshine and green pastures. No pictures of the estimated 15 million lambs that die each year from exposure, starvation and birthing problems. No pictures of animals with no access to shade in temperatures of over 40 degrees.

Thousands of people protested about animal cruelty in Melbourne in 2018 but this did not even rate a mention in the media. Those concerned about animal welfare had to take more dramatic action to gain attention to gross animal cruelty and the virtual imprisonment of animals in factory farms for example. Pigs held in stalls where they cannot even turn around, chickens in cages so small they cannot extend their wings. Do we as a society actually think it is OK for pigs to die thrashing to death in gas chambers, for animals to have their testicles, tails, teeth and beaks cut off without anaesthetic, and for calves to be removed from their mothers who can bellow for their babies for days? Those same calves who can be transported to abattoirs and be given no food or water for 36 hours and that is deemed lawful!

It is discriminatory to allow one type of protest and not another. At the time of the Dominion anniversary protest, union rallies shut down central Melbourne demanding industrial law changes. Our Premier, Daniel Andrews, attended that one. Was he criticised for that? Not to my knowledge. We cannot have a law for one type of action and not another. We do not need Ag Gag laws which penalise people who expose cruelty and protect the perpetrators of that cruelty.

Our reputation regarding animal welfare overseas is in tatters. The public have a right to know what is happening in industries which exploit animals. People such as Lyn White of Animals Australia have quite rightly won recognition for their efforts to expose animal abuse and educate the public about practices which are cruel and certainly not transparent.

Some suggestions for reform could include:

Recognition that animals are sentient and can feel fear and pain just as we can.

Laws to protect whistle blowers in all industries including animal agriculture.

Greater transparency regarding animal welfare and how our food is produced.

An independent body overseeing animal welfare that does not have vested interests in protecting animal industries

CCTV in all slaughterhouses and the discontinuance of some egregious killing practices on religious grounds.

Codes of practice which protect farm animals in a comparable manner to pet animals and which will punish offenders.

The Five Freedoms for all animals – basically freedom from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury and disease, fear and distress and the freedom to express normal behaviour .

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/five-freedoms-for-animals/>

<https://www.dominionmovement.com>

<https://www.voiceless.org.au/hot-topics/factory-farming>

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File1:

File2:

File3: