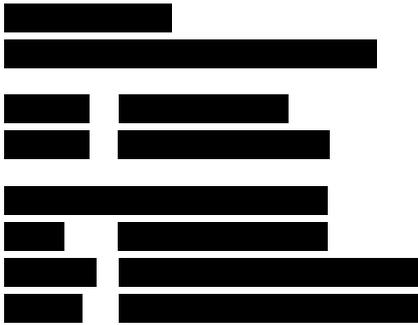


LEGION TRIAL PTY LTD

10th July 2019

To the Economy and Infrastructure Committee,

My name is Danyel Cucinotta and together with my sister, Renay Ahmed have chosen to continue our three generations of egg farming. Whilst, farming is not the easiest of jobs it should not be a dangerous job! We face many challenges such as trying to meet supply with demand, price of feed, drought, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week monitoring and the general operations of any business however, we should not have to live in fear of Animal Activists who believe they have the right to invade our farms and threaten the lives of our family, staff and risk the Welfare of our Animals.

My Great Grandparents and Grandparents migrated to Australia in the late 40's after the second world war to create a better life for themselves and believed with hard labour and love they could create a stable future for their family. They began with Free Range Egg farming in the 60's and moved to Cages in the 70's since the "Egg Board" (Government) said that they wanted safer eggs for the consumer, and they wanted to improve Animal Welfare. While these cages were basic it was also the only technology they had to work with. Nevertheless, my grandparents cared more than anyone about those birds. My grandfather sacrificed time, effort and money to ensure the girls were looked after to the highest of standards for his time, spoke to each bird every morning and played them music when they seemed distressed. Fast forward to the early 2000's my uncle and father decided they wanted to continue farming and like any good farmer, they decided to improve their practices to what we know as the conventional cage in full environmental sheds. Instantly, we saw a major improvement in animal welfare and the overall health of the bird. This improvement came at a hefty price however, we were naive to think that money was the only price we'd be paying back over the years.

As young kids in the early 2000's I remember alarms would go off at night on the farm and dad would race down to the farm thinking water/power may be off but instead he would be confronted with people who "didn't believe" in what we do. What is it we do? We are providing a high quality, affordable food source for Australian Families and we are open and transparent with our customers on our farming system. Over the years we have built a loyal customer base who believe in what we do and trust the product we produce meets their standards and that is why they continue to purchase our product.

Growing up on the farm we quickly realised that animal activism was not something you just saw on Television or Social Media. We have had to deal with Animal Activists in reality. While we can try and explain the reasons behind our farming systems and how the Science can prove its benefits, it is very difficult to debate an emotional argument with science.

We can bore you with the fact that trespassers cause a huge breach of biosecurity and the birds can become infected with a disease, the reality is that birds become distressed when people break in and try and release 5 or 6 chickens out of 20,000 or the fact that it's illegal to trespass and cause destruction but instead we're going to explain what this does to our family.

In the more recent years my sister and I have had to witness multiple break ins onto our farm. Due to these incidents becoming more frequent security has been increased at a significant cost to our family. The last incident was a few years ago but on this occasion the Police Dog was also called in and the two activists were caught on farm. These 2 girls who were caught were the same age as us and they were charged with trespassing and sent to court with no consequence. Why is it they were charged with trespassing and not breaking and entering when clearly our sheds were broken into?

I have personally received death threats on social media and multiple phone calls threatening to come to our farm and "stuff us in a cage" or "kill you for your life choices". Not to mention the tens of thousands of times our father would have heard similar if not worse things as he advocates for the egg industry in Victoria. In no workplace is harassment tolerated but for some reason in farming it falls on deaf ears. No one seems to protect the farmer, rather all the focus is on the bird. Ultimately animal welfare is determined by the person looking after the animal, yet we are the last person anyone thinks about. We love what we do and open our doors to anyone who wants to see, as we have absolutely nothing to hide. We are a proud family, who started farming for the sole purpose of feeding the family and has grown into feeding thousands of Australian Families.

My concern now is with our fourth generation.

Will they put up with the constant abuse?

Will it be worth their time and effort?

This is something that should concern politicians everywhere. Because, our children are the real farmers, they have the experience passed down from generations of farming and it is in their blood. Farmers in this country face many challenges and they will work through them all and continue to farm but, this constant abuse from Animal Activists and the continued threat to be broken into must stop. It is only a matter of time before something or someone goes too far, and someone ends up hurt or dead.

But what should scare our economy more is –

Who will provide the food we all take for granted if we all decide enough is enough?

We are more than happy as farmers to have open discussions with people who don't agree, continually improve when the science backs it up and continue our legacy which runs much longer than many know. But we are in desperate need of stricter laws and actual penalties for those who do the wrong thing. As farmers, we are held accountable everyday with constant scrutiny and audits from all over the place.

Why isn't the Animal Activists Groups held to the same accountability?

Why is their moral compass somehow above the law?

Why is our lives and our safety so much less important than the birds we look after?

Why is it they take the law into their own hands.

The laws in society are put in place for everyone. No one should be allowed to take the law into their own hands, and everyone should be held accountable when they break the law.

Yours faithfully

Danyel Cucinotta and the whole Family

Renay Ahmed

Brian Ahmed

Nuge Ahmed

Hilmi Ahmed

Andrew Cucinotta

Ariana Cucinotta