

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian agriculture

Melbourne—Wednesday, 4 September 2019

MEMBERS

Mr Nazih Elasmari—Chair

Mr Bernie Finn—Deputy Chair

Mr Rodney Barton

Mr Mark Gepp

Mrs Bev McArthur

Mr Tim Quilty

Ms Sonja Terpstra

PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Melina Bath

Mr David Davis

Mr David Limbrick

Mr Andy Meddick

Mr Craig Ondarchie

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips

Ms Mary Wooldridge

Dr Catherine Cumming

WITNESS

Christopher Delforce, Executive Director, Aussie Farms.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearings of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Before you play your video I would like to confirm to the people in the gallery that all of it has already been published online. If people in the gallery find some of it distressing and you want to leave, please advise the secretariat at any time. Chris, before we start, state your name for the Hansard record, and allow us some time to ask you questions, please. Welcome.

Mr DELFORCE: Christopher Delforce, and just confirming that all footage I will be showing has already been published online, yes. I will speak for a little bit before I ask for the footage to be played.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you all today. I brought with me for anyone who would like to see it a copy of the documentary *Dominion*, which is a two-hour exploration of modern Australian animal agriculture that I have been involved in producing. This film is the culmination of eight years of footage, exposing to the public the reality for animals confined to our nation's factory farms and slaughtered in our nation's abattoirs. Much of that footage is from here in Victoria. For those eight years this footage has been a constant source of embarrassment to the animal agriculture industry and those in government who unwaveringly support them, serving to undermine their claims of ethical farming and humane slaughter.

What this Inquiry must not do is criminalise the act of whistleblowing, of reporting on matters so clearly relevant to the public interest in a country that prides itself on being animal lovers. I ask instead that we address the underlying issues here—the reason that people like myself risk their lives and their liberty to capture evidence crucial to the public's ability to make informed decisions as consumers.

I would like to play the footage please.

The CHAIR: Again I am going to have to warn the gallery: please, if you have any problem and you would like to leave the room, advise the secretariat. Thank you.

Video shown.

Mr DELFORCE: I am talking about gas chambers in all major pig slaughterhouses, which the industry has been calling humane for over 25 years while our footage has shown that every pig who enters that chamber and is lowered into that gas screams and thrashes in desperate agony.

I am talking about the blending up of live male chicks in the egg industry because they will never be able to lay eggs; the brutal slaughter at just five days old of male calves in the dairy industry because they will never be able to produce milk; the routine mutilations of piglets, lambs, goats, calves, chickens and turkeys without pain relief and their prolonged and extreme confinement; the common failure of stunning methods that are seeing fully conscious pigs, chickens and ducks drowning to death in the scalding tank; and the fear that comes for all animals in slaughterhouses at seeing those before them being killed.

There is another video also. Released only this morning: the barbaric slaughter of unwanted male baby goats in the goat dairy industry, mere hours old, at one of—if not the—country's largest goat farms, owned and operated by the same individual who owns the Gippy Goat farm, a key inspiration as I understand it for this Inquiry. From this individual's presentation to the Inquiry two weeks ago you could be forgiven for forming the impression that they did not engage in this practice—that they did not as a matter of daily routine pay someone to take male babies from their mothers, load them into a trailer, drive them behind a workshop shed, far out of view of the other farm staff, and shoot them in their tiny heads with a captive bolt gun while they cried out in fear and confusion, one by one, in front of each other. You could be forgiven for thinking that this is someone who has been hard done by as a result of activists protesting on the smaller of their two farms while in that very month they were building a sixth enormous shed at their main facility just minutes away. You could be forgiven for thinking these things after eight months of a passionately vitriolic campaign of hate and abuse

against anyone who dares call themselves an animal activist, fuelled by those with a financial stake in animal cruelty and by conservative media. But you would be wrong. This is a clear example of the crucial role that activists play in forcing transparency on an industry that would much rather keep its consumers, the Australian public at large and our Parliament in the dark about the cruelty that they engage in daily under the protection of truly woeful animal welfare laws.

This Inquiry has been framed also around protecting farmers from home invasions, but in 45 years of activists documenting and uncovering abuse in farms and slaughterhouses there has not been a single incident of an activist going anywhere near the homes of farmers.

Livestock animals have essentially no protection under Victoria's animal welfare laws. What would earn jail time if done to dogs or cats is entirely legal and considered standard industry practice when done to pigs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, sheep, goats and fish. Meanwhile, animal agriculture contributes more to climate change and environmental degradation than fossil fuels, wasting vast amounts of crops and water to produce comparatively minuscule quantities of food while demanding financial assistance for a drought for which they themselves are largely responsible.

These revelations about systemic cruelty and this footage have led to an increasing public awareness that is inherently catastrophic to industries that abuse animals and rely on secrecy and legal exemptions to do so. They must not be allowed to have their secrecy bolstered by new laws that would ultimately target the Australian public's right to know. Instead let this Inquiry be an opportunity to examine our relationship with animals and, more broadly, our relationship with those in our world who are vulnerable—who we view as inferior to ourselves. Let this Inquiry be an opportunity to challenge the notion that might equals right and to enact laws that would protect those who cannot defend themselves—not oppress, subjugate and exploit them—to begin the conversation about shifting to more ethical, sustainable methods of feeding a growing population amid an environment emergency and to put into law the opposition most Australians have to animal cruelty. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Chris, let me start by asking the first question: do you believe that maybe more education will help solve these problems? Or is there anything you would like to see the Government do—new policies?

Mr DELFORCE: Absolutely. I think education is a huge part of this. At the end of the day, I cannot force anyone to be a vegan. I cannot force them to eat in any particular way or to do anything. All I can encourage is for them to find out the truth for themselves, and at present it is very difficult for the average consumer to do so. They are not given the full story by this industry that has a vested interest in not telling that full story. The only way consumers have been able to see for themselves what is actually happening in farms and slaughterhouses is with the kind of footage that activists are putting out. It should not be up to activists to do that. Nobody wants to go into these places and risk their lives, risk their freedom, to capture this footage to expose it. Nobody wants to do it. The fact is it is just the only way that consumers are able to see this for themselves.

So the Government could fill that role, forcing transparency on these industries and implementing CCTV that is actually publicly accessible. We have CCTV in a number of slaughterhouses in Australia. Some of those slaughterhouses have then been exposed by the work of activists, proving that the cameras are useless. No-one is actually watching them; they are just there for show. Often—well, not often but sometimes—they are not even recording to a DVR.

I think that we need more awareness generally. We need a greater push for education in schools around what is actually happening in farms, not just the side of the story that the industry would like to present, where animals are frolicking on green hills in the sunshine and willingly giving up their lives. We should be talking about how the male calves and the male goats are taken away from their mothers and killed in the dairy industry. We should be talking about the male chicks who cannot lay eggs and are ground up as waste products. We should be talking about the fact that all these animals have to be slaughtered—the dairy cows when they start slowing down their milk production, the egg-laying hens when they start slowing down their egg production and of course all animals who are used for meat. They all end up at the slaughterhouse, whether they are free-range, whether they are organically fed. At the end of the day we need to be talking about the fact that they are ending up at the slaughterhouse. They do not want to die. Every single one of them is feeling fear. They are suffering,

at least in some way, in that place. It is never an enjoyable, happy experience; it is never a humane or an ethical experience. I think we need to start having a more open conversation about what we are doing to animals.

If I am wrong in my belief that most Australians are opposed to animal cruelty, if we have this kind of footage and this kind of information freely available to anyone and people then still choose to consume animal products, then I am wrong and that is all I can do. But I believe that that is not the case. I believe that most people are opposed to animal cruelty; they just do not know that they are paying for it when they purchase meat, dairy, eggs and other animal products. I think in order for them to be able to make informed decisions as consumers they need to be given all the facts.

The CHAIR: Okay. In your submission you talked about animal activists' trespassing being non-violent and also about the alleged emotional distress of farm animals. Don't you think that trespass and the theft of livestock from a person's farm is highly emotionally distressing and violating?

Mr DELFORCE: For the animals or for the—

The CHAIR: For the farmers.

Mr DELFORCE: For the farmers. When activists are trespassing on a farm to capture footage, the farmers do not know they are there. I mean, they know when the footage comes out, and it is distressing then because the footage is showing something that they would much rather the public not see. I think we cannot allow ourselves to not have this conversation about what is happening to animals just because having that conversation might be distressing to farmers. And again, no activist wants to trespass; no-one wants to be doing this. If those farmers were open and honest about what they were doing and if they were putting up footage themselves, not just of the nice-looking side of it but the darker side of it as well—every aspect; the dead ones, the injuries, the animals sent to slaughter, the routine mutilations and other barbaric practices that are carried out legally—there would be no need at all for activists to trespass. I think that is what activists want—for their role in this to be diminished.

Mr FINN: Mr Delforce, do you regard all farmers as being enemies of animal welfare?

Mr DELFORCE: No, I do not, and I certainly do not view farmers as bad people or anything either. I think that it is true that many farmers do in fact care about their animals that they are raising and it is an incredibly distressing day when they send those animals to slaughter. Some of them they will have gotten to know personally. That is particularly the case where you might have small kind of hobby farms or generally smaller numbers of animals. When you have got hundreds of thousands or even millions of animals, as a lot of poultry farmers have, it is impossible to form those personal connections with these individual animals. They become much more units of production that are expendable. But, yes, I think it is very distressing, and a lot of the time they are brought into this as multiple-generation farmers. This is the life they have known, and they are not aware of any way to get out of it. They are kind of told as they are being raised to ignore what they see as suffering and to just think that this is the way it is done, this is the way it has always been done and this is the way it will continue to be done. But I think we should be giving farmers an opportunity to acknowledge their own emotional pain in sending these animals off to slaughter and giving them a way out of it if they want to accept it.

Mr FINN: I am just trying to get a handle on the mindset of why you do what you do. Do you see yourself as being morally superior to the people that you are targeting?

Mr DELFORCE: Not at all. What I do comes from a place of completely the opposite. I do not think I am morally superior to anyone, so I am not going to go and cut someone's throat as a result. I think this idea that we can breed and cage and abuse and kill animals to make a profit from them—people who are doing that are imposing their own perceived moral superiority and general superiority over those animals. That is something I do not want to be a part of. I am just trying to say that I have no more right to live than these animals, who also do not want to die.

Mr FINN: I will perhaps finish by asking the question that I asked Professor Freeman, and that is: would you ultimately like to see the removal of all animals from agriculture in this country?

Mr DELFORCE: As my personal ideal world, we would not be breeding and killing animals when we can live perfectly happily and healthily without doing so.

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you, Mr Delforce, for your evidence and the videos. I find this all fascinating from a philosophical point of view. I would like to follow on again from what Mr Finn said about removing animals. Transparency is a big thing, right? I am big on transparency as well. I would like to know: what is the ultimate endgame here? Are we trying to provide transparency so that consumers can make different choices based on that, or are we providing transparency so that we can build political support for the state to prohibit these practices or prohibit the use of animals? There are two different goals here, and one cannot help but come to the conclusion that you think that it should be the State's role to prohibit these practices.

Mr DELFORCE: I think that we need to get to a place where the laws are matching the moral beliefs of the Australian public. If people are opposed to animal cruelty, there should not be laws in place that allow animal cruelty to occur on a daily basis. I think we need to take that separation and bring it together so that there is no cruelty happening legally.

Mr LIMBRICK: I will follow on with a similar line of questioning that I had before, then. Using animals is a part of many people's culture; it is part of their food, it is intrinsic to their culture and in some cases, like in animistic-type cultures, it is part of their religious beliefs. How do we come to the point where we can reconcile the idea that animals should not be used for human consumption, for example, and yet we tolerate these other cultures existing? Are there conditions under which these cultures should be allowed, or should those cultures be prohibited as well?

Mr DELFORCE: That is a very good question, and a very difficult one.

The CHAIR: You can take it on notice if you wish.

Mr DELFORCE: I think at the very least a conversation is what we need to be having. I feel like most of the country, that does not apply to. The vast majority of people who are consuming these animal products are not doing so because of religious beliefs or because of long-held traditions as part of their culture; they are just doing it because that is what they have been raised to do. If we can tackle that, if we can at least get those people thinking about what they are paying for—the kind of cruelty they are paying for—I think that kind of conversation could then have flow-on effects to instances where cruelty is occurring as a matter of culture. My belief is that animal cruelty is not acceptable just because it has been part of someone's culture for many years. I do not think that that justifies doing horrible things to other beings. But again I am not really in that place to tell anyone what they can and cannot do.

Mr LIMBRICK: But legislators are.

Mr DELFORCE: Legislators are, yes. I think that there can be a fairly catch-all scenario where much of the cruelty that is occurring in this country for primary production reasons can be outlawed.

Mr BARTON: Thanks, Chris. I just want to move away and talk about activists going onto people's property. Correct me if I am wrong. It is normally, more often than not, that someone tells you there are bad practices happening there and there is animal cruelty going on, is that correct?

Mr DELFORCE: I would say that is not actually correct. There are certainly times when there have been tip-offs from workers or people who have seen the cruelty firsthand and do not feel comfortable being whistleblowers themselves, so they will contact an animal protection organisation, but from what I have seen much of the cruelty that has been captured and exposed has been kind of—you throw a stone and you are bound to hit some animal cruelty in this country. Any piggery you go to, you are going to see cruelty; any broiler farm you go to, you are going to see cruelty—because it is the industry standard. Cruelty is the legal standard. That is what I try to address more so than these illegal one-off instances that are reported as tip-offs.

Mr BARTON: As graphic as those videos were, were they all legal?

Mr DELFORCE: Everything that I showed in those videos, yes—that was all legal.

Mr MEDDICK: Thank you for your testimony and the videos here today, Mr Delforce. I have a number of questions in relation to your activities and how they have been portrayed in the media et cetera—and by some within the Parliament—and some of that relates to the Aussie Farms map. Now, some people think that your map is a breach of privacy. Can you explain your take on that and how does it differ from the map that is actually published by the Federal Government's own department of environment?

Mr DELFORCE: The Federal Government map is one source of data that we have used. We have also used other, all publicly available, sources of information, like the *Yellow Pages* and other business directories. Everything that we put on our map is publicly available information that anyone can go and find. It is information about businesses. Businesses do not have a right to privacy in Australia. We are not focusing on individuals. The fact that some farmers, yes, do live on the same property is irrelevant to us and what we are trying to do with this map. We are simply trying to say that this is where animals are being bred and exploited and abused and killed for commercial purposes, and we think that is something that consumers have a right to know about.

Even seeing what these places look like from satellite imagery on Google I think for a lot of people is quite shocking, because they might be imagining a kind of red barn with a few cows walking around and some chickens; they are not imagining 10 identical, massive sheds containing hundreds of thousands of animals. Part of the idea of the map is to show people what modern animal agriculture actually looks like and how this idea of the small family farmer is not really relevant anymore. They have been pushed out of business by these large corporations that are accounting for, I would say, 99.99 per cent of animals that end up as food.

Mr MEDDICK: One other question, if I may, Chair. What would it take for you to stop doing the work that you do as a whistleblower?

Mr DELFORCE: I think that myself and others will continue to do this work as long as there is a need that is not being fulfilled—as long as there is not transparency. If there were to be transparency, if it was public knowledge what was happening in these places, then I would not feel any need for myself—I do not think anyone else would feel any need—to go onto these facilities and try to capture and expose that, because they would be exposing something that is already out there in the public domain, already in the public awareness. It would not make sense; it would not be a useful use of time.

Mr MEDDICK: If I may—I am terribly sorry, Chair—that leads me into one final thing. You talked a lot about what you term as legalised animal cruelty and standard practices there, but I do believe you have also reported illegal cruelty on farms in the past. Can you explain how those reports have been handled?

Mr DELFORCE: There have been a number of times when we have reported cruelty on farms and in slaughterhouses. Many of those times—pretty much every time—we have been ignored. Sometimes those reports have been turned around against us. I have been charged as a result of going to the police about cruelty that is happening in piggeries, for example. Sometimes we have seen a response happen only after we then take it to the media and we show that the public is outraged about what is happening and they are saying to the RSPCA—or whoever the body may be in each state—should have the power to go and investigate and prosecute these places. When the public holds these bodies to account, we start to see action. But there have been a few instances that come to mind, particularly slaughterhouses here in Victoria, where we have seen things like ducks routinely ending up having their throats cut and going into the scalding tank while they are still clearly conscious. The way that they are meant to be made unconscious is by their heads being dipped into an electrified stunning bath. All it takes is for them to lift their heads to avoid that stun bath and then when they have their throats cut they are fully conscious and they experience the full pain of that process.

An illegal mains-powered electric prod in a pig slaughterhouse, here in Victoria also, again was reported to PrimeSafe and completely ignored. It has been years, and as far as I am aware that device is still being used despite causing extreme pain to these animals. We have also recently reported an illegal slaughterhouse that was essentially operating in someone's garage, and in that instance we have seen a strong response from PrimeSafe and from the Department of Agriculture. It is a shame that we are not seeing that kind of response most of the times that we have reported illegal cruelty.

Mr QUILTY: I just have a couple of questions about the CCTV cameras. It would be fair to say that you want cameras not so much to pick up occasional instances of breaking the law but to actually show routine practices.

Mr DELFORCE: That is right.

Mr QUILTY: I guess if we put cameras everywhere all over the place, it would reduce crime and bad behaviour in society, but in the end obviously you would be creating a surveillance state. I am morally opposed to having the government supervising people everywhere, but do you think the end justifies the means in this case?

Mr DELFORCE: I think it would be quite limited in that you would see the holding pens and you would see where the animals are actually being killed and that is it. There would be complete signage; people would be fully aware that they are being filmed when they are in those areas. A lot of businesses already do this. They have signage up saying, 'You are being filmed'. Employees are used to that. It is just part of the job, and they accept that when they take that job they are going to be filmed.

I do not think that what is happening in farms and slaughterhouses should be able to be done with secrecy. To me that is a worse crime. We are not talking about people walking down the street minding their own business; we are talking about something that is so clearly in the public interest because people want to know about animal cruelty. They want to know what they are paying for. They do not want to be funding that animal cruelty, essentially. I believe most people would agree that it is a lesser evil to have surveillance over small sections of farms and slaughterhouses publicly available to consumers than to have what is happening in those places completely closed off and secret.

Mrs McARTHUR: Thank you, Chris. I am interested in the generalisations that keep getting touted around. You said that some farmers live on properties. That is factually incorrect. The vast majority of farmers live on their own farm and they see that farm as their home. Do you accept that?

Secondly, do you know that in Western Victoria Region, where Mr Meddick and I are members of Parliament, there are thousands of dairy farms, for example, and there are thousands of people employed in this industry? What would you do with the workforce, over 6000 or 7000 in the dairy industry alone in one region, if we were to end all animal food production?

Mr DELFORCE: I will answer your first question first, about farmers living on the same properties as their farms. I think it is important to note that when we are talking about piggeries and broiler sheds, farmers are not living inside those sheds. They are not living in the filth with thousands of animals. You could not stand the smell. You could not stand—

Mrs McARTHUR: That is a generalisation, Mr Delforce—'They can't live in filth'. There are so many accreditation procedures. They could not possibly actually live in filth. They would not be productive.

Mr DELFORCE: I do not think that you would like to sleep in a shed with hundreds or thousands of animals, though. I think you would find it quite filthy. These animals are defecating; it is not a nice environment to live in. I can guarantee—I cannot guarantee, but I am fairly certain—that no farmer is actually living inside the sheds with these animals. They are living in their home. It may be on the same property, but they are not living on the farm itself.

Mrs McARTHUR: So you think it is acceptable, then, to trespass on somebody's private property which is their home?

Mr DELFORCE: No-one is trespassing in the home itself.

Mrs McARTHUR: Yes, you are, because their farm is their home.

Mr DELFORCE: We need to differentiate between the farm itself and the home. One is a business; one is a private residence. Activists like myself only have interest in the business and what is happening where the animals are. There are not thousands of pigs and chickens being farmed in the home. Just because it is on the

same legal property, that does not make it the same thing, and I think we are seeing a lot of attempts to conflate these two things as though they are the same thing. It is about distracting attention away from the fact that what is happening to animals in these places is wrong. It is trying to make it an issue of farmers versus vegans and farmers feeling threatened, when it is not their homes at all that are the target. It is these massive sheds with thousands of animals.

Mrs McARTHUR: So do you accept that farmers do not feel threatened? Is that your contention?

Mr DELFORCE: I think that they would feel threatened if they were engaging in cruelty and there was a risk that that cruelty was going to be exposed to the public. I think that would be a very threatening thing.

Mrs McARTHUR: So you do not accept that farmers feel threatened just by the very fact that you could trespass on their farm and steal their animals and actually commit cruelty yourselves?

Mr DELFORCE: Animal activists will not be committing cruelty. That is opposed to what we are trying to do here.

Mrs McARTHUR: But that is what has occurred, hasn't it, Mr Delforce?

Mr DELFORCE: Not to my knowledge, no.

Mrs McARTHUR: Yes, when chickens were released from a barn, hundreds were killed.

Mr DELFORCE: I would love to see the evidence of this.

Mrs McARTHUR: The very fact that you move onto a farm, which is a biosecurity area in most places, you are threatening the health and welfare of those animals.

Mr DELFORCE: I should make it clear that every single one of those animals has their health and welfare threatened merely by the fact that they are destined to end up in a slaughterhouse. That is in complete opposition to their welfare in any sense of the word. No animal wants to go to these places. It is not in their best interests to be slaughtered.

These are not biosecure environments. You have got rats and mice and cockroaches and birds and insects coming and going freely from these places, carrying in all sorts of diseases—

Mrs McARTHUR: But you would not want us destroying rats, Mr Delforce, would you?

Mr DELFORCE: Well, I am not suggesting you destroy rats. I am suggesting that these are not biosecure environments, and by nature—

The CHAIR: Any other questions?

Mr MEDDICK: Just an observation, if I may, Chair. Mr Delforce has come here of his own free will to testify and to give his very factual accounts and the factual video of what we have seen as practices here. It behoves the work of this Committee to have not played on their mobile phones and ignored that footage completely.

Gallery applauded.

The CHAIR: Have you finished? Thank you. First of all, members have the right to ask any questions. Second, Chris has the right to answer or take it on notice or refuse to answer. That is your right and that of the members. The people in the gallery: I do not want to keep warning you, but please, please do not clap. I mean, sometimes you have to laugh; I understand that and things like that.

I would not accept your comment you made about your colleagues. I understand we all sometimes have messages coming through that are important to this Inquiry. That is why the members sometimes need to look at their phones.

Mr MEDDICK: I accept that.

The CHAIR: Thank you—so as long as we understand each other. Now, back to the same issue. Chris, you were saying something. It is your call.

Mr DELFORCE: Thank you. It actually kind of sounds like we are on the same page here. None of us want activists to be going onto farms. None of us want that, whether it is a perceived biosecurity risk or a risk to farmers themselves or a risk to the animals. Let us stop the need for that. Let us make these places transparent so that activists feel that they have no reason to go onto these places themselves.

Mrs McARTHUR: Mr Delforce mentioned about garages. I cannot quite remember the context, but if you talk to the veterinary industry, one of the worst areas of cruelty at the moment is people illegally breeding puppies in garages. Do you have an agenda to ensure that there are CCTV cameras in people's garages and homes if there are people breeding puppies and selling them on the internet and being collected at McDonald's car parks?

Mr DELFORCE: Well, I would say that that accounts for an extremely small fraction of the cruelty that we are seeing in this state and this country. So I would much rather focus on the bigger picture and on attacking as much cruelty as we can, on minimising as much cruelty as we can. I think if we were to put all of our efforts into something that is quite niche, we are missing out on making real impacts for millions—billions, potentially—of animals.

Ms TERPSTRA: Thanks for your presentation and all the information you have given, and thanks for coming here today as well. You may have already answered this with your previous response, but do you think that there are policies that Government or industry could put in place to better enable community members to address animal welfare concerns? You have been talking about transparency, but what in particular do you think could be done to address these concerns?

Mr DELFORCE: I have mentioned the idea of CCTV that would be publicly accessible. I think it would be reasonable for some facilities to implement a sort of open-door policy, where if members of the public want to come and see what a typical large-scale piggery or large-scale slaughterhouse looks like, they can do so without needing to make a month-in-advance appointment or without being turned away on biosecurity reasons. There is no reason that visitors cannot follow the same biosecurity protocols that workers are supposed to follow. If a member of the public wants to see inside these places, currently most farmers will turn them down and most slaughterhouses will turn them down. I think that that should change and people should be given the opportunity to see these places.

I think we need some policies around honesty in marketing and product labelling. I know this was brought up in the previous testimony as well. We should be talking about the full details about what is happening to animals on farms and in slaughterhouses. For example, with milk and dairy products we should be talking about the male calves being killed. We should be talking about the fact that many people still seem unaware that cows do not lactate merely for the fun of it. They lactate to feed their young and they need to be impregnated, they need to give birth, in order to lactate. People have this idea that cows are just constantly producing milk and that if you do not milk them then it is cruel to them. But they are being repeatedly impregnated and their babies are, in many cases, being killed, especially if they are male, but also just if they are excess to the farm's needs. So these are basic, everyday facts of the industry that consumers are still unaware of, and if there were to be information about this on products when you purchase dairy products then I think that would go a huge way towards achieving the sort of transparency that we are looking for.

Also going after deceptive phrases like 'high welfare' and 'humane' and 'ethical'. You cannot claim that it is possible to humanely slaughter an animal who wants to live, who is screaming, who is trying to escape, who is fighting with every last breath to get out of that place. You cannot say that is humane. The definition of 'humane' is to act with compassion or benevolence, and you cannot do that in a slaughterhouse environment where you are unnecessarily killing an animal. So I do not think that businesses should be able to claim that their products are humane. I see that as false advertising. They should not be able to claim that it is ethical when there are alternatives that are growing every day in availability. Pretty much every food that you can eat as someone who eats animal products, you can eat vegan versions of them, and they are in mainstream outlets

now. You cannot claim that it is still ethical to eat animal products when there are these more ethical alternatives freely available. Those are the main points.

Mr BARTON: Chris, I just want to get my head around this. In terms of the regulators—Mr Meddick touched on it before—clearly you have got a lack of confidence in the regulators performing. What do they need to do? Do they need a bigger stick? What needs to happen in your view?

Mr DELFORCE: I do not think that these bodies are funded to perform the task that they are expected to do. Ultimately, I cannot remember the exact figure—this is quite vague, I apologise—but the RSPCA in one state ended up prosecuting, I think, 1 per cent of animal cruelty cases that came to them. They do not have the resources to go after these things.

Also I think that there is an inherent conflict of interest when these bodies are governed by the department of agriculture, whose purpose is basically to breed and kill animals. If there is cruelty occurring in the process of breeding and killing animals, it is not in the best interests of the department to stop that, especially if it is a systemic, large-scale practice. So I think we need to separate those two avenues. The department of agriculture should not be responsible for monitoring animal cruelty.

The CHAIR: Thank you. No further questions. In a few weeks you will receive a copy of the transcript for proofreading. On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you for your time and contribution.

Mr DELFORCE: Thank you all.

Witness withdrew.