



Farm Animal Rescue Inc.

Committee Secretary
State Development, Natural Resources and
Agricultural Industry Development Committee
Parliament House
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Submission about the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

Dear Committee Secretary

Farm Animal Rescue thanks the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee for the opportunity to make a submission about the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

Farm Animal Rescue is a registered Queensland charity that re-homes and provides shelter to farmed animals that are disposed of by the animal agriculture industry. We are contacted hundreds of times each week with information about animals that are abandoned, neglected, homeless or abused and respond as best that we can for a small charity. Education is also a core objective of our organisation, as we work to help consumers better understand the nature of animals used for food production and the mechanisms employed by industry to confine and “grow” them.

My name is Brad King and I am the Founder of Farm Animal Rescue. I travelled on the 8th of April to Yangan to speak to the press outside of the [REDACTED] slaughterhouse after the release of video footage that identified multiple violations of the ACPA and CSIRO codes.

I attended this event because of the serious disconnect between the way that government, industry bodies and animal product corporations talk about welfare in agriculture and the reality of the cruelty and neglect that we see on a daily basis in our work.

Animals like Fiona, confined to a tiny dairy industry calf crate where her skin was damaged by living in her own faeces and urine. Animals like Gemma, trapped in a broiler breeder facility where she is constantly jumped by roosters who many times tear at her skin leaving her bloodied and lame. Animals like Howard, who arrived covered in faeces from head to toe because the pig farm itself was covered in faeces. Animals like Jeff, who should have been shot with a captive bolt gun soon after birth at a goat dairy farm. Animals like Anne-Marie, who by 8 years of age was broken and traumatised by the dairy industry, and now at 11 years of age lives on supplementary feeds and arthritis medication. Animals like Vivienne, who arrived with 250ml of egg matter rotting through her body from the inside out.

DAF Poor Welfare Management Performance

Queensland for years has relied on animal protection organisations to find and report on cruelty in animal agriculture. Despite the reports provided, annually the number of prosecutions for animal abuse in Queensland is often zero.

The proposed legislation attempts to stop whistle blowers from entering facilities and recording information. It also stops protestors from being able to protest in a way that receives media attention.

We understand that the video footage from the Yangan facility is now in the hands of both DAF and the Queensland Police Service. In the 20 minutes of footage experts have determined that there are 21 violations of slaughter code.

DAF have determined that there is no prosecution to be made of [REDACTED] employees or management, and have opted to provide additional training, regardless of the fact that the CSIRO slaughter code at 2.6.2.2 requires that "Personnel who stun animals should always be trained and competent". Likewise management were not found in breach for failing to ensure that employees who stun were trained and competent.

An employee outside the facility stated “if this gets out we are f***** ” when he saw the footage. And yet, no action has been taken.

The Importance of Civil Disobedience when Government Won't Listen

When activists have worked hard to expose such specific and quantifiable violations of code, and Government refuses to act, it is not that difficult to understand the desire to get the information to consumers.

On May 31st this year we ran a joint rally with Animal Liberation Queensland outside 1 Edward Street demanding Justice for Farm Animals who suffer because of industry employees who break the rules. Almost one hundred and fifty attended right outside senior Queensland Government official's offices. A meeting with the Minister for Agriculture was declined and no media attended.

Around eighty people attended the ██████████ Yangan facility on April 8th, most of those standing outside the facility with signs in a way entirely allowed by the law. This action was reported upon by every TV station, every radio station, every newspaper, the BBC, in the New York Times and by Al Jazeera. 55,000 people viewed the Dominion Movie, a documentary on the real Australian food industry within 48 hours and Google searches for “vegan” increased 400 percent.

From a Communications perspective this was an incredibly successful action, and was one that received a heated response from Ministers and possibly has resulted in our dialogue today.

We Oppose This Legislation

The drafters of this legislation would have us believe that the legislation is required to support biosecurity measures, to protect the privacy of people in their homes and to avoid additional cost to the animal agriculture industry.

It is worth considering however, whether this is truly the whole justification for legislation being so quickly drafted. It needs to be considered that this legislation is considered so important

because these actions have been so successful in educating the public on what is a secretive and dark industry opposed to transparency.

Many animals suffer on farms. Many animals suffer in transport. Many animals suffer in slaughterhouses. We don't know how many because unlike countries like the US and Denmark, in Australia records are not required to be kept.

Each abuse is a tragedy for a sentient, clever, scared and confused animal. Yet, the Queensland Government acts like violent acts done against these creatures is not a crime.

However, our opposition to this legislation is less about increased fines for trespass and more about the complete lack of a welfare management plan at DAF. The concept of animal processing facilities reporting upon their own crimes is laughable. Clearly the [REDACTED] employees knew that they were breaking the code, but none of them wanted to fix the problem.

At best, this is one half of the legislation. The Agriculture Ministry needs to determine how it will ensure that the suffering of animals like those in Yangan simply doesn't happen in Queensland. This legislation takes away the only monitoring of animal use facilities in the state, and replaces it with nothing. It is legislation that supports a lack of transparency, that allows those who want to cut corners and use untrained and unsupervised labour, do so without observation.

Where is Minister Furner's plan for the welfare of animals in Queensland?

Other Agriculture Clauses

Some other elements of this bill could be used to begin to build a welfare plan. For example,

Clause 5 Should be strengthened to include farm animals being transported and exposed to extreme weather conditions. This clause should also ban the tethering of any animal by the neck on a vehicle. A harness or cage should be a minimum requirement.

Clause 8 Should be strengthened to include any animal denied food, water or healthcare, and should provide for any concerned citizen to investigate a concern about the welfare of any animal.

Please note however that the bill does not provide for ANY means of monitoring or enforcing these regulations.

The remaining agriculture clauses make criminals out of concerned citizens. Since the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] protest I have become aware of the identities of some of the protesters who entered the facility. These included teachers, aged care workers, community support workers, child carers, grandmothers and animal protection workers. These are not criminals, these are people who will cross the street to check that you are OK. They are community-minded and want a fair and equitable world.

The criminalisation of these community-minded people, the use of the words “feral “and “terrorist” by Ministers and Members of Parliament is appalling. Minister Furner stated that he had had a “gutful of these people” while presiding over a department that consistently fails to protect Queensland animals and refuses to establish a dialogue with animal advocates.

At the same time we have seen the Premier and Deputy Premier attending functions with wealthy cattle graziers and energy company executives, while those who support fairness to animals and a healthy planet are left out on the streets and ignored.

Across Australia politicians are speaking out in favor of meat over plant-based alternatives, in favor of dairy over plant-based milks and in favor of eggs over egg substitutes (like apple sauce!). There is a thriving plant-based sector which is being ignored by a government that demonstrates a commercial bias for animal farmers over modern, efficient and environmentally friendly alternatives.

Animal rights activists and vegans have as much right to be a part of the conversation about how animals are treated in Queensland as any other group, regardless of how wealthy they are.

However the Queensland Government has chosen to exclude these voices from the welfare conversation. The Queensland Government has chosen to avoid talking about the realities of

animal-based food production instead making statements like “Queensland farms had some of the world’s best practices when dealing with animal welfare”, statements that are baseless and not factually correct.

Opposed to this Bill

Farm Animal Rescue does not support this omnibus bill. The Queensland Parliament has a duty to protect animals in Queensland and this bill compromises what is already a very poor performance. It does not provide for an alternative system. It marginalizes some of the most valuable people in our communities, and the penalties are completely out of step with similar offences.

The additional welfare clauses are too narrowly defined and are of questionable benefit being so specific.

Brad King

