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Egg Farmers of Australia (EFA) Submission to Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

Egg Farmers of Australia (EFA) is the voice of Australian egg farmers. We advocate on key policy issues affecting our industry and promote egg production by providing transparent information to the public.

The focus of the commercial egg industry in relation to this omnibus bill relates to the importance of biosecurity. The purpose of the bill includes consideration of changes to legislation where there is an increased biosecurity risk posed due to actions of those who trespass into biosecurity zones.

Media continues to report on incidents of trespass and steps by the committee to recommend increasing jail terms and fines for creating a biosecurity risk would be a deterrent. An improvement of legal sanctions sends an important signal to the whole Queensland community that Government takes the purposeful invasion of farms as a criminal act rather than the perception that Government is intimidated by people who do not feel obliged to comply with Queensland law.

EFA is most appreciative of the legislation being considered by the Commonwealth Parliament on the Criminal Code Amendment (Agricultural Protection) Bill 2019 and the new legislation in NSW, and consideration of new being considered by Queensland. A clear message is sent to the community that parliament takes unlawful invasions seriously.

Some egg producers have increased costs after needing to install additional security following break-ins by those who do not understand biosecurity risks. This cost is an added expense that should not have to be borne by the farmer. Examples of security installed by some egg producers around the nation are alarms in sheds, should a door be opened an alarm will trigger, a full-time security guard stationed at the farm gate and large fences as deterrent for entering a farm.

It should also be noted that in many instances, where egg production is taking place is not just a place of work but is also the home of the people who own or manage egg production. Reports of large numbers of people going on to farms have resulted in impacts on farming families and people have sadly left the industry due to the stress and impact of trespasses when they are simply trying to produce food. With an increasing population we require more producers of food for our nation not less.

There have been instances where those trespassing have removed hens from cages by themselves. Laying hens are a flock animal; they are part of a pecking order. When birds are removed from their flock and taken out of the shed, they become stressed. They are also taken from an air-conditioned shed to (usually because they break in at night) cold air. This also adds to their stress. If they are not handled correctly, they can break legs and wings and night invasion wakes the birds from their sleep. None of this makes a bird happy.

Egg Farmers of Australia recommend and supports the amendments to the *Summary offences Act 2005 Biosecurity Act 2014 and Exhibited Animal Act 2015*.

For further information pertaining to this submission, please contact Egg Farmers of Australia CEO, Mrs Melinda Hashimoto by email.