

Inquiry into the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

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1 June 2022

Mr Chris Whiting
Chair, State Development and Regional Industries Committee
Parliament House, George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Via Parliamentary Committee website

Dear Mr Whiting

Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the important discussion and development of the **Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022 (Bill)**.

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. With offices worldwide, including Australia, our vision is a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding.

FOUR PAWS is also a core member of the Australian Alliance for Animals, and thus we are writing in support of their submission.

Particularly, we would like to emphasise the following important key developments within the Bill, and in some cases, room for further development to best address animal welfare in Queensland. This can ensure the Bill reflects the objective to 'modernise Queensland's animal welfare laws' that are in line with 'modern scientific knowledge, community attitudes and expectations.'

Recognise Animal Sentience

Recognising animal sentience is a central feature of modern animal welfare law and is important for Australia's international reputation. As more countries include recognition of



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animal sentience in their animal welfare laws, the absence of such recognition in Australia becomes increasingly apparent.

Most people would agree that animals experience feelings such as pain, fear, enjoyment, and comfort. Understanding and recognising animal sentience helps identify the needs of animals and ensure their welfare is prioritised. Millions of animals across Australia would benefit from state and federal governments acknowledging them as sentient beings.

In 2012, the EU officially declared animals as sentient beings and it's long overdue for Australia to catch up.

There is, however, opportunity to change this as recognising animal sentience is now part of Australia's trade policy and was addressed in 2019 when the Australian Capital Territory became the first jurisdiction in Australia to change the legal status of animals from being purely 'property', to sentient beings.

Establish a Queensland Animal Welfare Authority

The current legislation does not offer reasons on *why* protecting the welfare of animals is important, and the standards of care are generally determined not by reference to animal welfare science and what animals need, but by the most influential stakeholder groups at the time of drafting. This Bill is an opportunity to address this imbalance.

Currently, DAF focuses on promoting industry growth and productivity, but KPIs for improving animal welfare outcomes are lacking. While the current 2021-2025 Strategic Plan does include the objective of meeting 'high standards of animal welfare', it fails to include any KPIs for how to measure success against or achieve this objective.

As agriculture portfolios will be faced with competing responsibilities and priorities, allocating the Authority to the agriculture portfolio would be problematic. While the enabling legislation could protect the Authority's independence to some extent, ideally it would be situated within a portfolio that did not give rise to the same competitive tensions.

Australians have shown that this is an important issue for them.

Recent polling by Roy Morgan Research in March 2022 found that 74% of Australians supported the creation of an independent body to oversee animal welfare. Further, social research commissioned by the federal Department of Agriculture in 2018 also noted that members of the public raised concerns over the perception of conflicting interests when "the same regulatory body responsible for the promotion for the agricultural industry was also responsible for ensuring animal welfare standards."



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Recognise the Queensland Animal Welfare Advisory Board in the Act

The role of independent expert advice in policy development should not be subject to political whim but enshrined within the Act as a central pillar of Queensland's approach to animal welfare standards.

Approved cattle procedures accreditation scheme

The cattle procedures accreditation scheme proposed in the Bill does not require the use of pain relief for spaying cattle, despite clear evidence that spaying causes pain. This leaves the cattle industry heavily exposed to social licence risks. Allowing painful husbandry practices to continue without the use of pain relief, where pain relief products are available, is contrary to the Bill's objective of modernising the legislation to reflect contemporary scientific knowledge, community attitudes and expectations.

Public polling conducted by Roy Morgan Research in March 2022 found that 95% of Australians supported laws requiring the use of pain relief for painful surgical procedures on animals.

While we support the introduction of the approved cattle procedures accreditation scheme, we believe the scheme must be strengthened by requiring the use of pain relief for painful surgical procedures and ensuring that surgical spaying of cattle is replaced by alternative methods as soon as they are available.

CCTV for all slaughter facilities

We support the introduction of CCTV for slaughter facilities and the proposed notification requirements; however, these requirements should not be limited to horses and should be broadened out to apply to all slaughter facilities in the state.

Slaughter facilities are one of the highest risk points in the production chain for animal welfare. These risks are just as prevalent in cattle, sheep, poultry, pig and other slaughter facilities as they are in knackerries.

CCTV in slaughter facilities is also becoming an issue for trade and market access as Australia negotiates trade agreements with other nations. Australia's lack of CCTV in slaughter facilities became a point of contention in the recent UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement negotiations with UK officials raising concerns about Australia's animal welfare standards.



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Disclosure requirements

As a general principle, we support transparency and accountability in the enforcement of animal welfare law and therefore support the Bill's proposed disclosure requirements for the RSPCA. We would also support, however, that such requirements be extended to satisfy greater transparency.

Compliance monitoring and enforcement activities are not reported on DAF's website. Statistics such as the number of compliance monitoring inspections carried out, directions issued, and prosecutions commenced should be part of DAF's disclosure requirements.

Greater transparency about compliance and enforcement activities serves to increase community confidence as it provides assurances that compliance with the Act is being monitored and transgressions are being dealt with appropriately.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to contribute to this important legislation.

Rebecca Linigen

National Director
FOUR PAWS Australia