

## **Submission on the Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper**

**Tim Westcott**

*Any questions arising from the content of this submission can be directed to:*

*mr.tim.westcott@gmail.com*

### **Introduction**

As Australians, we owe much of our prosperity to the exploitation of non-human animals, so much so that many of us form an identity around animal agriculture. There is, however, a growing number of Australians who reject the notion that non-human animals are ours to do with as we wish. We see a future in which prosperity is not tied to the use and abuse of animals. This submission is a very small, but optimistic step in achieving that future. I hope to see agriculture prosper in Australia, but not at the expense of non-human animals.

### **Policy idea 6 – d:**

#### **Enforcing animal welfare legislation, as well as strengthening laws to stop trespass on farms**

Consumers have a right, and a responsibility, to understand the conditions endured by the animals that they eat, even when these conditions are legal under animal welfare legislation. Throughout history, unethical acts (including slavery, the stolen generation, and the suppression of women, non-whites, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBT community) have been condoned, either explicitly or implicitly, by society and government. In order for community attitudes to evolve, information, including graphic portrayals of the suffering of oppressed groups, is vital. This is currently the case with non-human animals, who are perhaps the most consistently oppressed group in history.

When this information is not provided by industry or government, it falls upon activists to gather and distribute the information. Without this information industry and government lack incentives to improve practice in line with community expectations. By instituting harsher penalties for offences against animal agriculture, as is suggested in the Green Paper, state governments will essentially deprive the public of the information they need to make informed choices at both the supermarket and the ballot box.

### **Page 27:**

**“... ensuring greater consistency in areas such as animal welfare standards...”**

Regulatory consistency and reducing the burden of complying with regulation are important aims, however it must be ensured that animal welfare outcomes do not suffer as a result. It should, however, be noted that regulatory inconsistency in animal welfare legislation is often in favour of animal agriculture practitioners and not the animals they farm. For example, the sections of the Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012 (Qld)[1] that deal with the welfare of companion animals are significantly stronger than those that deal with farmed animals (including disparities in the required standard of treatment for companion animals and farmed animals of the same species). The federal government should put pressure on state governments to correct such inconsistency and to bring the welfare standards of animals used in commercial applications in line with community expectations, as embodied by the welfare standards applied to companion animals..

The government should implement an independent office of animal welfare to ensure enforcement, consistency, and transparency of animal welfare standards and to ensure these standards are in line with community expectations. This office should be independent of the department of agriculture so as to avoid conflicts of interest. Implementing this in a satisfactory manner may go some of the way to appeasing animal activists who see themselves as having a duty to expose cruelty by gathering evidence on private property. Such an official body with the power, will, and resources to act on behalf of animals, may convince activists that their efforts are better spent elsewhere.

#### **Policy idea 19 – b:**

##### **More targeted pest and disease management and control**

It is crucial that the welfare of so-called pest animal species, whether invasive or non-invasive, are taken into account when devising control methods. Non-lethal control methods should be developed and deployed; lethal methods, or methods that cause lasting suffering, should not be used to increase profitability. In situations where the viability of agriculture is threatened by local animal populations, whether indigenous species or non-native species, the benefits of undertaking agriculture in these areas must be weighed against the animal welfare cost, particularly in cases of agricultural expansion.

#### **Page 107:**

##### **Restoring livestock export markets”**

The live export of animals to other countries should be phased out, beginning as soon as possible. The negative animal welfare outcomes of this section of the industry are too great and the ability to enforce regulation is too limited to justify its continuance. On top of the well documented failures in

enforcing so-called humane slaughter practices[2], the transport of live animals vast distances over long periods of time is unjustifiably stressful and extremely dangerous for the animals[3][4]. The government's continuing insistence on the expansion of this cruel practice is in direct contradiction to its commitment to meeting community expectations.

### **Policy idea 23**

#### **Improving the biosecurity system**

It is important to recognise all major biosecurity risks, including intensive animal agriculture which has been complicit in a number of serious recent global pandemics including Avian Influenza, Swine Influenza[5][6], and Mad Cow disease[7]. Such outbreaks threaten not only the lives of the animals and the profitability of animal agriculture, but also human health and well-being. In order to guard against such outbreaks in Australia, as well as foodborne illnesses, significant changes to intensive animal agriculture practices should be implemented.

#### **List of References**

- [1] <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/A/AnimalCaPrR12.pdf>
- [2] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-08/live-animal-exports-escas-data-on-complaints-and-breaches/5950584>
- [3] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-17/livestock-exporter-under-investigation-for-mass-sheep-deaths/5265336>
- [4] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-08/sheep-deaths-on-plane-flight-investigated/5797906>
- [5] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2042988/>
- [6] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1817683/>
- [7] <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20031228&slug=madcowdairy28>