

# **Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper Submission**

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## **Name of Organisation/Individual**

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## **What are the top policies from the Green Paper that the Government should focus on in the White Paper and why?**

## **What policies from the Green Paper don't you support and why?**

## **General Comment**

I come from a farming background. I am concerned that the federal government is divesting itself of responsibility for animal welfare.

In its quest for productivity, the farming community must never forget that the consumers that buy their products are increasingly demanding improvements in animal welfare – not productivity gains and the suffering endured in factory farms.

The federal government was short-sighted in not taking account of the views of animal welfare groups that responded to its invitation to make submissions on the issues paper and terms of reference for the White Paper.

Since assuming office the Abbott government has:

- abolished the Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee under the guise of cutting unnecessary and inefficient regulation;
- handed over responsibility for the delivery of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy to states and territories; and
- rejected the Gillard government's move to create an Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports.

Animal welfare should be paramount in any White Paper dealing with the competitiveness, productivity and profitability of primary industries.

When developing policy initiatives to increase the productivity of primary industries, the federal government must work with state and territory governments to tighten animal protection laws and ensure they are enforced.

As farms get bigger to create so-called 'productivity gains', animal welfare suffers. Factory farming of hens for meat or eggs, ducks, pigs and large dairy enterprises go hand in hand with cruel animal husbandry – and the Australian community increasingly realises that is not what it wants. Australians do not condone caged animals, high-density stocking, de-beaking of hens, dehorning

without anaesthetic, teeth clipping of pigs and other mutilations in the name of productivity and profitability.

We have already seen how big companies like Coles and Safeway have responded to the loud and clear community calls for the phasing out of sow stalls and cage eggs. Subway, McDonalds and a large number of IGA grocers have also responded to community concern about animal welfare and will phase out cage eggs.

The European Union and New Zealand have much more stringent animal welfare laws than Australia, which lags behind.

I have a number of points to raise.

### 1. Live exports

Only a small proportion of farmers are engaged in live export; yet this unpopular and cruel trade costs taxpayers millions of dollars to administer through the department of Agriculture bureaucrats in Canberra.

All Australian farmers are tainted with the ignominy of live export in the minds of the Australian people, even though its earnings are small compared with chilled meat exports. Continuous breaches of the live export standards and the abject cruelty and slaughter methods mean this trade has forfeited its social licence. How can the animal welfare responsibility/compliance for this trade be deferred to the states when its federal supply chain safeguards (ESCAS) fail continuously?

### 2. Wild dogs

The government has proposed spending \$10 million in this area. However, there are major animal welfare concerns associated with lethal methods of control - such as 1080 poison, which inflicts a slow and painful deaths on dogs and also kills many innocent native mammals which are being driven to extinction.

Australians have shown how strongly they feel about such issues as puppy farms, and they are increasingly opposing government policies that allow cruelty to dogs. To ignore the concerns of the Australian public about animal welfare will cause them to turn against the farming community and its produce.

Non-lethal measures such as sterilisation, relocation and the use of guard animals like alpacas and Maremma sheepdogs should be introduced. Indiscriminate killing by baiting etc is unsustainable and should not happen.

The funding would be better spent on finding more ethical, economical and non-lethal approaches to such animals.

### 3. Ag-gag laws targeting animal activists

Resorting to laws like those in the USA that target animal activists and their surveillance of agricultural practices will be counterproductive and will turn the Australian public against what they

see as secretive farming methods. 'What do farmers have to hide?', they will say. It will breed suspicion in the minds of consumers about the treatment of animals used to produce their food.

Ag-gag laws are also anti free speech, freedom of information and freedom of the press. In other words, they are a backward step and belong in the Cold War era.

Ag-gag laws also highlight the inadequacy of Australian animal welfare laws that allow such cruel factory farming practices to occur. They further highlight that there is totally inadequate monitoring and enforcement of animal welfare laws at the state and territory levels.

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