



11th March 2015

Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via Email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Subject: Western Australian Farmers Federation Submission to the Inquiry into Criminal Code Amendment (Animal Protection) Bill 2015

Dear Committee Secretary

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (WAFarmers) registers its support and endorsement for the Criminal Code Amendment (Animal Protection) Bill 2015, referred by the Senate to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee for inquiry.

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (WAFarmers) is the State's largest and most influential rural advocacy and service organisation. Founded in 1912, WAFarmers boasts a membership of over 4,200 farmers including grain growers, meat and wool producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers, commercial egg producers and beekeepers.

Collectively our members are major contributors to the \$5.5 billion gross value of production that agriculture in its various forms contributes annually to Western Australia's economy. Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and capably manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental wellbeing of that land and the animals (livestock) that exist on this land.

The WAFarmers Federation welcomes and endorses the proposed Bill.

WAFarmers believes everyone has a moral obligation to treat all animals humanely. It is not acceptable to allow animals to suffer as a result of deliberate ill treatment, neglect or poor management practices. Western Australian livestock producers take their responsibilities for welfare issues seriously. They are committed to the delivery of good animal welfare outcomes through a national framework approach.

WAFarmers believes that all citizens have a duty of care to act responsibly and to adhere to animal welfare legislation and relevant industry codes of practice. Livestock owners and managers aim to ensure their staff and anyone handling livestock have the practical knowledge and experience in sound animal husbandry practices.

Address: 125 James Street, Guildford WA 6055 // PO Box: PO Box 68, Guildford WA 6935

Tel: (08) 9486 2100 // Email: reception@wafarmers.org.au

www.wafarmers.org.au



Across the world, farmers are facing orchestrated and ongoing attacks from individuals and groups who believe they have the right to invade businesses to place covert cameras to obtain video footage or other, sometimes staged, 'evidence' of bad behaviour.

Of significant concern to the industry, is the deliberate delay in releasing such footage to the media for alternative reasons that are not related to the wellbeing of the animals involved.

The aim of this Bill is to curb the excesses of activists who take that step too far and push activities outside the legal system. WAFarmers strongly believes cases of animal cruelty must be reported when they are seen; so that action can be initiated immediately by the appropriate authority, rather than stored for some politically expedient time to do so.

This Bill is being painted by some people, as an 'ag-gag' type approach to silence activist behaviour. Nothing could be further from the truth. WAFarmers supports the intention of this Bill, which is aimed at forcing individuals and groups to act responsibly for the good of the animals they claim to care for.

WAFarmers does not in any way condone animal cruelty or deceptive or wrongful conduct. We believe animals should and can be raised, handled, transported and processed in ways that ensure their safety and freedom from cruelty, abuse or neglect and that any wrong doing is reported immediately.

All states and territories in Australia are working toward consistent standards and guidelines for animal welfare. WAFarmers fully support and promote these standards and aim to ensure the highest possible level of animal welfare is practices throughout the supply chain in Western Australia.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on (08) 9486 2100 or dalepark@wafarmers.com.au should you wish to discuss any aspect of this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dale Park".

Dale Park
President

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