

Submission
No 386

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF BATTERY CAGES FOR HENS IN
THE EGG PRODUCTION INDUSTRY**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

22 July 2019

Chair
Legislative Council Select Committee on the
Use of Battery Cages for Hens in the Egg Production Industry

Dear Ms Hurst

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Select Committee on this important issue.

Hens need more than food, water and shelter, they deserve a good life, where they have their biological needs met AND at the same time are provided the opportunity to stretch their wings, lay their egg in a nest, dust bathe, scratch in litter or dirt and perch. They can do none of these in a battery cage, and the welfare compromise caused by battery cages (or as the cage-egg industry likes to call them, conventional cages) is well articulated in the animal welfare science literature including the literature review commissioned by the Victorian Government to inform the national Standards and Guidelines process¹.

While many in the community buy cage-free eggs when shopping and many food service, food manufacturing and retailers are moving away from using or selling eggs from hens that live in battery cages, it is likely that there will still be a market for cheap eggs from cage systems. It is the responsibility of governments to reflect contemporary science and community expectations in legislation and policy, and so it is the responsibility of the NSW Government to legislate an end to battery cage use by 2025. By this time the investment made to comply with the 2003 Poultry Code will be fully or almost fully depreciated.

The forward-thinking egg companies in NSW have been investing in non-cage systems for many years because they have known that is the direction the market is heading. For those laggards who want to exploit animals for their own gain, and those who run parallel systems, an industry restructuring package should be made available for growers to either exit the industry or to support conversion to cage-free systems. Cage free systems include those where hens have access to the outdoors, multi-tier aviaries and floor-based systems with litter. At the same time, consideration needs to be given to other ways to support those companies who have never had cages, or already moved away from cages – it is unfair if their cage using competitors are helped to make a transition away from cages that they had to fund themselves, or have never had cages.

I do not support the use of 'enriched' or 'furnished' cages – while in theory they may be able to go some way to meet the needs of hens, European evidence is clear that at a commercial scale, the scratch pads etc do not work. Also, such eggs will still need to be labelled as having come from a cage system.

NSW must also introduce labelling requirements for eggs – whole eggs and egg powder and egg as an ingredient should include labelling to indicate to consumers what production system they have come from. This transparency will allow consumers to make informed choices.

In relation to the minimum standards for hen housing, I defer to RSPCA Australia and support their views on this and all other terms of reference.

I urge the Committee to recognise that the days of confining animals to cages where they can't even stretch their limbs let alone express their natural behaviours is over. For hen welfare, their use should stop immediately, however pragmatically, a transition out of cages by 2025 is more than generous.

¹ http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/370126/Farmed-Bird-Welfare-Science-Review-Oct-2017.pdf

I agree to my submission being made public but please keep my name and address confidential.

Yours sincerely