

**Submission
No 419**

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

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**NSW Government Submission to the
Legislative Council Select Committee
on the
Use of Battery Cages for Hens in the
Egg Production Industry**

PREPARED BY THE NSW GOVERNMENT

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Executive Summary

The NSW Government recognises the importance of safeguarding animal welfare, and providing a strong and effective regulatory framework to support good animal welfare outcomes. In order to achieve these outcomes, the Government is committed to working with egg producers to support a productive and sustainable egg industry.

With a gross value of egg production of \$263.1 million in 2017-18¹, the viability of the egg industry is imperative to the state and our regional economies. NSW is the main producer of eggs in Australia, accounting for 33% of Australia's total egg production value, followed by Queensland and Victoria.

Animal welfare is an important consideration in any animal production industry, including egg production. Regardless of the type of hen housing system, all Australian egg farms must satisfy animal welfare and food safety regulations.

The NSW Government supports a national approach to ensure consistency in policy and legislative frameworks to protect animal welfare, as changes to the regulatory environment affect all Australian states and territories.

A national approach is critical to not only ensure appropriate welfare outcomes for all poultry irrespective of location, but ensure industry viability in New South Wales.

In line with this approach, a process is underway to develop enforceable, nationally consistent Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for poultry, a process to which NSW and all other states are actively contributing. This work is scheduled to be provided to Agriculture Ministers for decision in late 2019.

A national approach is the only way to ensure nationally consistent welfare outcomes for the poultry industry and that the interstate trade of animal products meet the same standard.

In addition to a national approach to national Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines, the NSW Government is also committed to progressing other areas of animal welfare reform through the NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan. The Action Plan will ensure that people responsible for animals provide for their welfare, in line with the best available science and community expectations.

¹ ABS 2019, 7503.0 Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2017-18.

Overview of the Egg Industry

There are approximately 21.8 million layer hens in Australia kept on commercial layer farms to produce eggs for human consumption² with approximately 33 per cent of these hens on commercial layer farms in NSW.³ The Australian egg industry is domestically focused, with over 98 per cent of industry revenue in 2017–18 coming from domestically consumed eggs.⁴

There are three types of egg production systems: cage, barn and free range systems; however it should be noted there is significant variation within each type of system, especially free range systems. Many producers run more than one type of production system and in some cases more than one production system is operated on the same farm. Farms vary in size from less than 1,000 hens to over 500,000 hens, with commercial farms with flocks of 20,000 - 60,000 common. The proportion of Australian layer hens kept in each type of production system is at Figure 1, below, broken down by farm size. Over 80 per cent of Australia's layer farms are small to medium in size, and approximately 55 per cent of hens in Australia are kept in cage production systems with the remaining in cage-free systems (barn or free-range).⁵

Figure1 – Australian layer hens kept in each production system by farm size⁶

	Large (>500k layer hens)	Medium (>100k to 500k layer hens)	Small (>5k to 100k layer hens)	Micro (up to 5k layer hens)	Total
Cage	18%	27%	10%	0%	55%
Barn	0%	3%	6%	0%	9%
Free range	0%	11%	24%	1%	36%
Total	18%	41%	40%	1%	100%

² Australian Eggs Annual Report 2018, <https://www.australianeggs.org.au/dmsdocument/881-annual-report-2018>

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 7121.0 - Agricultural Commodities, Australia, 2017-18
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/7121.0>

⁴ NSW Department of Primary Industries, Performance, Data and Insights 2018, November 2018,
https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/841163/15116_PDI2018_DecEdition.pdf

⁵ NSW Department of Primary Industries, Egg production systems in Australia,
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/poultry-and-birds/poultry-planning-and-keeping/poultry-keeping-environment/egg-production-systems>

⁶ Proposed Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines Poultry Consultation Regulation Impact Statement Nov 2017 <http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/files/2015/07/Public-Cons-Version-Poultry-RIS-Nov-2017.pdf>

In cage systems, hens are housed in cages, located inside a shed. Modern automated systems for caged eggs include climate control, feeding, watering, ventilation, lighting, and manure and egg collection. Hens are kept in groups of four to twenty, with each bird having a minimum space allowance that is prescribed in animal welfare regulations. Typically cage systems have several tiers with a belt between each level to remove and prevent manure from falling on the birds below. Colony cages are larger and contain a greater number of hens (up to 100), and may include a perch.⁷ Furnished cages may include enrichments such as perches, nesting boxes, scratch areas or dust bathing areas.

In barn systems, hens are housed in an indoor floor based system where hens are able to move about inside a shed that is equipped with nesting boxes, perches and feeding and watering systems. The number of birds inside the shed varies depending upon the size of the structure but may be up to 30,000 hens.

In free range systems, hens are housed in sheds very similar to barn systems, with the additional ability to access an outdoor range area during daylight hours. These systems can have fixed shed with larger flocks and access to permanent ranges, or may have smaller flocks with hens housed in mobile sheds with access to different range areas. The NSW Government understands these types of farms are high in number, however due to the nature of smaller flock sizes, the total capacity of this sector is a small proportion of the total industry production.

The NSW egg industry remained relatively stable in 2017–18 with an estimated production of 1.41 billion eggs. NSW accounts for 32 per cent of Australia's total value of egg production⁸, with gross value of production of \$263.1 million⁹.

Demand for eggs is being supported by population growth and the rising consumption of eggs as a cheaper alternative source of protein in lieu of meat, which has increased in price at a much faster rate than eggs.

The share of industry production attributable to free-range, grew in line with changing consumer preferences. While cage eggs accounted for the largest portion of eggs produced by the industry in terms of volume, free-range eggs accounted for more than half of the national industry's value, reflecting consumer preferences.¹⁰

⁷ Poultry Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Layer Hen Cages, Supporting Paper Public Consultation Version, prepared by the Poultry Standards and Guidelines Drafting Group, Oct 2016
www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/poultry/poultry-public-consultation/

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 7121.0 - Agricultural Commodities, Australia, 2017-18
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/7121.0>

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 7503.0 - Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2017-18
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/7503.0>

¹⁰ NSW Department of Primary Industries, Performance, Data and Insights 2018, November 2018,
https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/841163/15116_PDI2018_DecEdition.pdf

Current regulatory environment

Government's role

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (POCTA) and its supporting Regulation and Codes and Standards set out the required animal welfare standards in NSW. All livestock are protected by POCTA, including poultry. The enforcement agencies for POCTA are the RSPCA NSW, the Animal Welfare League NSW and the NSW Police Force.

The objectives of POCTA are to prevent cruelty to animals, and to promote the welfare of animals by requiring a person in charge of an animal to provide care for the animal, treat the animal in a humane manner, and ensure the welfare of the animal.

Section 34A of POCTA allows for adoption of guidelines relating to the welfare of farm animals. In 2005, the current national *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry* (4th Edition, 2002), was adopted as a guideline under section 34A of POCTA. The Code was prepared by the Animal Welfare Committee (membership included all Australian Governments) under the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. The Code is not mandated but can be used as evidence in proceedings under the Act or Regulation. In 2007, specific requirements from the Code relating to confinement of hens for egg production were mandated in the POCTA Regulation. The Code is under review and the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry are currently being developed to replace the Code (see National Standards and Guidelines).

Regardless of the type of production system, all Australian egg farms must meet animal welfare standards. Standards of animal welfare are enforced by the enforcement agencies for POCTA.

In addition to animal welfare considerations, egg producers must also meet the relevant requirements set out in the *Food Act 2003* (NSW), the Food Regulation 2015, and several standards in the Food Standards Code. Egg producers are routinely inspected by the NSW Food Authority for compliance with these food safety requirements.

The NSW Government also continues to advocate for improved animal welfare standards and in May 2018 committed to the NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan. The Action Plan will modernise legislation to deliver an animal welfare system that is focused on outcomes and reflects evolving animal welfare science and community expectations.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission released a guide for egg producers to understand their fair trading rights and obligations under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL). The guide specifically assists producers comply with the National Information Standard made under the ACL, which sets out requirements for egg producers using the words 'free range' when promoting or selling eggs. Egg producers may only use the words 'free range' where the eggs (whether packaged or unpackaged) were laid by hens that:

- had meaningful and regular access to an outdoor range during the daylight hours of the laying cycle
- were able to roam and forage on the outdoor range, and
- were subject to a stocking density of 10,000 hens or less per hectare.

Further, if the words 'free range' are used:

- on the packaging of eggs, the packaging must prominently state the stocking density, and
- in relation to unpackaged eggs, businesses must prominently display a sign containing words 'free range', and which prominently states the stocking density.

In addition to the National Information Standard, egg producers must also continue to comply with existing requirements in the ACL, including ensuring that the words and pictures they use on their packaging and promotional material when advertising or selling their eggs are accurate and truthful.

This allows consumers to make an informed decision about which eggs to buy based on their preferences for price, region and housing system. NSW Fair Trading administers the Australian Consumer Law in NSW.

National standards and guidelines

The NSW Government is committed to animal welfare outcomes across NSW. The NSW Government supports a consistent approach across all Australian states and territories and is committed to a national framework through the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines process.

Animal welfare and the regulation of egg production systems is an issue for all Australian states and territories. Without a coordinated approach to the regulation of egg production systems, there are significant risks. Not only could this lead to differential welfare standards between jurisdictions, an ad-hoc State-by-state approach could lead to production shifts across state borders. This could be detrimental to animal welfare, which could lead to increased movement of eggs from states and the importation of eggs from countries with lower animal welfare or food safety standards than NSW.

With consumer choice already the key driver of industry change over recent years (see Figure 2), and free-range production now accounting for more than half of the national industry's value¹¹, it is vital that Government's continue to support consumer choice.

A national project is already underway to convert the existing national *Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry* into nationally consistent, enforceable standards and guidelines, the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry*. The Standards and Guidelines will provide a basis for developing and implementing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia.

The standards and guidelines are a critical initiative of all Australian Governments, and are being developed in consultation with stakeholders and the general public under the auspices of the Animal Welfare Task Group. It is supported and funded by all Governments and industry. Animal welfare groups have also contributed funding to the poultry consultation process.

The new standards and guidelines will be based on current scientific knowledge, recommended industry practice and community expectations. It will consist of two parts – Part A outlining general standards and guidelines that apply to all poultry, and Part B outlining specific standards and guidelines for each species of poultry. 'Poultry' is defined to include chickens, ducks, emus, geese, guinea fowl, ostriches, partridges, pheasants, pigeons, quail and turkeys reared or bred in captivity. Part B of the document will have specific standards and guidelines for laying chickens.

¹¹ NSW Department of Primary Industries, Performance, Data and Insights 2018, November 2018, https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/841163/15116_PDI2018_DecEdition.pdf

The standards will outline clear minimum requirements for people responsible for the care and management of poultry welfare that will be used as the basis for developing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia. They will apply to all those responsible for the care and management of poultry. The guidelines are not intended for legislation and enforcement; they are recommended practices to achieve desirable animal welfare outcomes. The guidelines will be for consideration by industry for incorporation into national industry quality assurance and verification schemes.

A Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) including governments, veterinarians, animal welfare groups and industry representatives have been engaged to provide advice throughout the development of the standards and guidelines. The public have also been consulted with an extensive public consultation process taking place between November 2017 and February 2018 where over 167,000 submissions were received.

The draft standards and guidelines were revised in response to submissions from public consultation and an independent summary of scientific literature on poultry welfare. The SAG have had an opportunity to consider the revised draft standards and guidelines and provide advice. The NSW Government is working closely with the other jurisdictions in providing feedback as part of the re-drafting process.

The main decision-making principles in preparation of the national standards and guidelines are to ensure the standards are desirable for livestock welfare; feasible for industry and government to implement; important for the livestock-welfare regulatory framework; and achieve the intended outcome for livestock welfare.

Once finalised, the standards and guidelines are scheduled to be provided to the Agriculture Ministers' Forum for consideration in late 2019, and it is then a policy decision for each state and territory jurisdiction to implement the poultry standards in legislation.

Considerations for the Terms of Reference

Egg farming production systems

The national Animal Welfare Task Group has identified that animal welfare can be assessed using different frameworks¹² and that there is no precise means of comparing the overall welfare outcome for birds in different production systems.¹³

While the terms of reference for this inquiry focus on layer hen housing systems, it is ultimately the care and skill of the farmer and employees that is the greatest determinant of the hen's health and wellbeing. The importance of good stockmanship is emphasised in the *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry*. This includes that persons responsible for the care of poultry should be well trained, experienced and dedicated, with appropriate training undertaken in poultry management and husbandry. No single production system is "better" than another – each system has advantages and disadvantages, and each performs differently against different criteria.¹⁴

None of the production systems are superior across all relevant criteria, including food safety, hen health and welfare, biosecurity, environmental sustainability, worker health and safety, and food affordability.

The design of egg production systems in NSW is also driven by the need to ensure biosecurity, accommodate consumer preferences, ensure food safety and consider environmental impacts.

Regardless of the type of production system, all Australian egg farms must meet animal welfare and food safety codes, including undergoing third party audits for food safety.

Since 2007, the NSW Government understands the NSW egg industry has invested heavily and installed cages to provide greater floor space, door width and cage height.

In addition to the hen housing system, the system design, quality of stockmanship, rearing conditions and bird genetics can have an important impact on hen welfare outcomes in all production systems.^{15 16}

¹² Poultry Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Layer Hen Cages, Supporting Paper Public Consultation Version, prepared by the Poultry Standards and Guidelines Drafting Group, Oct 2016
www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/poultry/poultry-public-consultation/

¹³ Poultry Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Non-cage Systems, Supporting Paper Public Consultation Version, prepared by the Poultry Standards and Guidelines Drafting Group, Oct 2016
www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/poultry/poultry-public-consultation/

¹⁴ NSW DPI, Egg production systems in Australia, <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/poultry-and-birds/poultry-planning-and-keeping/poultry-keeping-environment/egg-production-systems>

¹⁵ Poultry Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Non-cage Systems, Supporting Paper Public Consultation Version, prepared by the Poultry Standards and Guidelines Drafting Group, Oct 2016
www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/poultry/poultry-public-consultation/

¹⁶ Poultry Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Layer Hen Cages, Supporting Paper Public Consultation Version, prepared by the Poultry Standards and Guidelines Drafting Group, Oct 2016
www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/poultry/poultry-public-consultation/

Consumer demand and preferences

Demand for eggs continued to increase in 2018, driven by growth in population and the rising consumption of eggs as a protein substitute for meat. Just over half of all eggs are bought by consumers in supermarkets and grocery stores. The remaining go to food manufacturers, restaurants, cafes and other food outlets.¹⁷

Currently, about 50% of table eggs consumed are from conventional cages with the price of eggs contributing to this preference.¹⁸

During NSW Government focus group testing, price was a key determinate of egg consumption particularly for low income families. The need to provide an affordable and healthy meal was balanced against animal welfare considerations. Choice is therefore important to consumers. With consumer demand driving more producers into free-range production systems, the market value of free range eggs sales more than doubled since 2007 (Figure 2).¹⁹

In direct response to these consumer preferences, three major supermarkets have already voluntarily committed to phasing out the sale of caged eggs in their stores, namely Coles by 2023²⁰ and Woolworths²¹ and Aldi²² by 2025. A number of major food retail chains and food manufacturers are also only using cage free eggs or are phasing to only using cage free eggs, although a significant proportion of eggs used in food manufacturing come from conventional cage systems.

As a result of consumer preference change, the proportion of eggs produced in free range production systems has been increasing in recent years.²³ This is evident in Figure 2 below which displays the percentage of market share of eggs over time, based on production system. Free range eggs currently account for approximately 54% of the egg industry's value.²⁴

Market pressure and preferences are clearly driving diversification in the egg industry, as highlighted in Figure 1. However, consumers still desire choice in the market to allow them to make decisions based on their preferences including dietary and budget.

¹⁷ IBIS World 2019, Egg Farming in Australia - Industry Report A0172. Accessed via subscription. <https://www.ibisworld.com.au/industry-trends/market-research-reports/agriculture-forestry-fishing/agriculture/egg-farming.html>

¹⁸ Roth I, 2018, Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Poultry Report for NSW Government following the Independent NSW Consultation Process, https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/822403/Report-to-NSW-DPI-on-poultry-welfare-standards-and-guidelines.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Coles Supermarkets, Responsible Sourcing, 2019 <https://www.coles.com.au/corporate-responsibility/sustainability/responsible-sourcing>

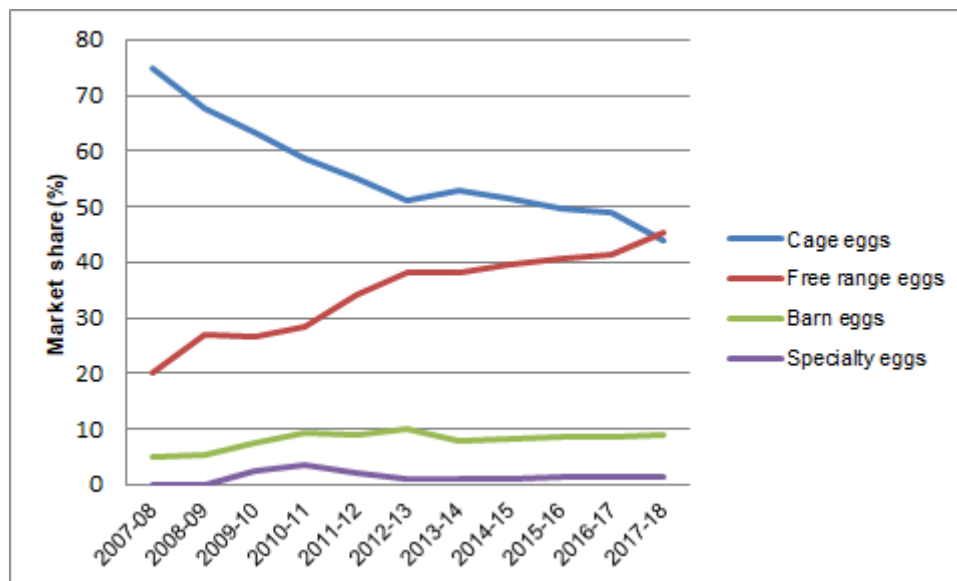
²¹ Woolworths Group, Animal welfare, 2019 https://www.woolworthsgroup.com.au/page/community-and-responsibility/group-responsibility/responsible-sourcing/Animal_Welfare/

²² Aldi, Animal welfare, 2019, <https://corporate.aldi.com.au/en/corporate-responsibility/supply-chain/responsible-sourcing/animal-welfare/>

²³ NSW Department of Primary Industries, Performance, Data and Insights 2018, November 2018, https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/841163/15116_PDI2018_DecEdition.pdf

²⁴ IBIS World 2019, Egg Farming in Australia - Industry Report A0172. Accessed via subscription. <https://www.ibisworld.com.au/industry-trends/market-research-reports/agriculture-forestry-fishing/agriculture/egg-farming.html>

Figure 2 - Market share of eggs over time in Australia based on production system²⁵



To inform their buying decisions, consumers require accurate labelling on egg packaging and advertising. To use the term ‘free range’ the eggs must have been laid by hens that had meaningful and regular access to an outdoor range during daylight hours across the laying cycle; and hens were subject to an outdoor stocking density of 10,000 hens or less per hectare.²⁶

In addition to hen housing system, consumers may also consider other factors such as degree of food safety, environmental impacts, efficient use of resources (particularly energy and water), and level of antibiotic use.

Environmental impact and worker health

The environmental impacts of egg production vary slightly across the different egg production systems. In modern cage housing systems, manure is removed continuously from the shed via conveyor belts located underneath each row of cages. In barn and free range housing systems, hens are primarily floor based with manure accumulating in the shed for the duration of the production cycle, which can result in higher levels of ammonia inside the shed.

The manure from egg production systems is often used as a fertiliser for pastures and has the potential to be used for energy generation. The litter produced by the floor based systems is significantly bulkier than the straight manure from a cage system, therefore reducing the cost-effectiveness of transporting and applying to pastures.

On free range farms, hens spend many daylight hours in the open outdoor range areas that may accumulate nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) which can potentially leach into the soil or be lost as runoff. There is little research about the nutrient losses from outdoor range areas of free range egg production. One trial of meat chicken free range areas discovered varying differences in

²⁵ AECL Annual Reports 2007 to 2018 <https://www.australianeggs.org.au/who-we-are/annual-reports/>

²⁶ Australian Consumer Law (Free Range Egg Labelling) Information Standard 2017 <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017L00474>

nutrient levels in runoff depending on soil type and intensity of the rainfall event. Although the overall nutrient load in the runoff from the free range areas was less than the load from a commercial golf course.²⁷

The work health and safety of poultry workers are covered by SafeWork NSW's A-Z of Farm Safety. This guide has been designed for farmers, by farmers, to help identify risks on a farm and address them. Further guidance on workplace specific topics such as chemicals, diseases, equipment, livestock, mental health and sun safety is also available.

Economic and social impacts

NSW has around 146 commercial egg producers²⁸ and a total of 310 egg businesses licensed with the NSW Food Authority that produce, grade, pack or pulp eggs.

NSW is Australia's largest egg producer with 1.41 billion eggs produced in 2017-18, accounting for nearly one-third of Australia's 4.3 billion total egg production.²⁹ The total Gross Value of Production of the NSW egg industry in 2017-18 was \$263.1 million.³⁰

Domestic egg prices rose by 0.7% in 2017/18. This trend was largely because of the growing consumption of high-value industry products, such as free range and organic eggs, which attract higher prices compared with cage and barn-laid eggs, partially offset by a fall in retail prices for free range eggs.³¹

The Australian egg industry is primarily focused on the domestic market, meaning most eggs produced are consumed locally. Exports accounted for only 1.9% of national industry revenue in 2017-18³². International trade in eggs is small and can be volatile, often influenced by poultry disease outbreaks in other countries.

Consumer preferences influence the production of eggs in NSW, and market signals are driving change in the industry, with egg producers making significant investments in infrastructure to improve productivity, adapt to consumer preferences and ensure compliance with animal welfare regulations over the last decade. In particular, as producers evaluate production infrastructure nearing the end of its lifecycle, there has been a gradual shift away from caged systems towards free range production systems. However, these production systems tend to be more expensive to manage and operate, resulting in costs passed onto consumers with free range selling at a higher price.

As part of the consultation on the national draft standards and guidelines, a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) was prepared to determine the possible costs of the change in regulation. This RIS indicated that adopting the national standards and guidelines as publically consulted from 27 November 2017 to 26 February 2018, would impose a cost of \$517.01 million on the layer hen industry. The main production system affected by the proposed standards would be free range

²⁷ Brown, G. and Gallagher, E. 2015, Free range chickens – odour emissions and nutrient Management, RIRDC Publication No. 15/017, March 2015.

²⁸ ABS 2019, 7121.0 Agricultural Commodities, Australia, 2017-18.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ ABS 2019, 7503.0 Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2017-18.

³¹ NSW Department of Primary Industries, Performance, Data and Insights 2018, November 2018,

https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/841163/15116_PDI2018_DecEdition.pdf

³² Ibid.

incurring almost 63 per cent of the total cost, mostly related to the ongoing cost of bird replacement and loss in egg sales associated with the proposed beak trimming restrictions.³³

The RIS also estimates that if conventional cages are phased out over a 10 year period, caged layer hen businesses would bear an additional \$655.03 million in costs, while if the same phase out occurred over a 20 year period the additional cost would be \$332.06 million.³⁴ The costs to industry of phasing out conventional cages includes replacement of production infrastructure before it has finished its productive lifecycle, and a larger quantity of hens required to maintain the volume of egg supply (hens are less productive in non-cage systems).³⁵

³³ Proposed Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines Poultry Consultation Regulation Impact Statement Nov 2017 <http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/files/2015/07/Public-Cons-Version-Poultry-RIS-Nov-2017.pdf>

³⁴ Proposed Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines Poultry Consultation Regulation Impact Statement Nov 2017 – Table 28 <http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/files/2015/07/Public-Cons-Version-Poultry-RIS-Nov-2017.pdf>

³⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

The NSW Government supports outcome driven welfare standards for all animals in NSW which is why the NSW Government has committed to both the NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan and the National Standards and Guidelines process.

The Action Plan will deliver modernised legislation that provides for good animal welfare outcomes and keeps pace with the latest animal welfare science, community expectations, industry practices and domestic and international market access opportunities.

The NSW Government's contribution to the poultry national standards and guidelines process will ensure both poultry welfare outcomes and industry viability. A national approach is needed for animal welfare regulations to ensure consistency across Australia. This will mitigate the risk of states acting alone. This could lead to inconsistent animal welfare outcomes, and an increase in imports of eggs from states or countries with lower animal welfare or food safety standards than NSW.

Together with all Australian states and territories, the NSW Government is carefully considering the robust regulation of egg production to ensure the impacts on industry, consumers, communities, and food security are balanced.