

Submission
No 436

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 24 July 2019

Partially
Confidential

Dear Committee Members

RE: NSW INQUIRY INTO THE USE OF BATTERY CAGES FOR HENS IN THE EGG PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the above.

The use of battery cages should be banned in NSW. Their use is inconsistent with animal welfare objectives and against community expectations that needless suffering of animals be prevented.

Welfare & Outcomes

Science and common sense dictates that confining a hen to a space so small that she cannot even stretch her wings for the entirety of her egg-laying life is cruel. The practices that are associated with keeping hens in close confines, such as de-beaking, and medical conditions that ensue from living in unhygienic, packed quarters, including fatty liver diseases and brittle bones, are just some of the poor welfare outcomes that hens suffer as a direct consequence of battery cages being used.

The welfare of egg-laying hens should be protected so far as possible by prohibiting the use of battery cages and associated cruel procedures. At a minimum, hens should be afforded a replication of their natural environment, allowing sufficient room to not just stretch but to roam and socially interact. She should have access not just to food and water but to shelter, sunlight, fresh air, soil and grass.

Community Expectations & Disclosure

Public opinion is overwhelmingly in favour of animals not be subjected to avoidable cruelty. In my view, the majority of Australians who support the battery cage industry are not aware that they are, because of inadequate labelling, or do not understand what the term means, due to the industry having an incentive to keep it this way.

I recently attended an event where a battery hen cage was on display. All of the other attendees were shocked and revolted by it – and that was when they thought that was a cage for one bird; it was subsequently pointed out that seven hens would typically be crammed into that tiny barren cage for the entirety of their short lives.

The public is entitled to proper labelling to ensure that not just eggs but egg-containing products are marked with their method of production so consumers can make an informed choice. As it stands, people who believe they are buying only free-range eggs may still be contributing to battery operations through products containing eggs.

Commercial Viability

The suffering that battery hens endure is greatly disproportionate to any benefit derived from battery cages. An animal's welfare should not be overridden by a mere financial saving to the producer or consumer. This is only achieved by cutting corners in animal welfare and in fact promotes animal cruelty by giving those that are most cruel to their hens a financial advantage over

their competitors who provide better facilities for their hens. This is not in line with community expectations.

It is noted that numerous jurisdictions have successfully phased out the use of battery cages and consequently increased hen welfare outcomes, and that Australia's major supermarket chains have committed to phasing out caged eggs in response to overwhelming public demand. It is disappointing that NSW law is well behind schedule to reflect such community values.

The use of battery cages is inconsistent with animal welfare objectives and should be banned, as should the import of products containing eggs from battery cage operations. If prohibition does not occur, then the use of cages should be discouraged, through financial disincentives or other means, and all products containing eggs should be clearly labelled with the source to allow consumers to make an informed choice and effectively "vote with their feet". All hens should be afforded the respect of decent housing in a facility that promotes natural behaviour. As a minimum this requires adequate space to roam and interact with each other, and access to resources such as sunlight and grass.

Thank you for your consideration.