

**Submission
No 472**

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

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Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a public submission to the NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on the Use of Battery Cages for Hens in the Egg Production Industry.

As an animal lover (all species), activist, advocate and vegan I welcome this committee and the broad Terms of Reference (TOR) which should enable a comprehensive Inquiry and examination and review of the egg industry and in particular the use of battery cages for hens.

My responses to the Inquiry's TOR are detailed below.

PREAMBLE

There are many historical examples we can refer to in history where a culmination of societal and public interest momentum has combined and general agreement has concluded and committed to a 'time for change', where we have witnessed monumental change in thinking and values, and have undertaken progressive and positive and compassionate legislative reform and direction.

Such reforms have and will always be brought about by grass roots movements - individuals, collective communities and key organisations. Sadly, such reforms are rarely ever instigated by our decision makers or legislators who habitually lack the 'will', vision or heart for progressive politics; and remain notably lacking in intestinal fortitude, beholden to political factions, powerful lobbyists and the misguided lure of economics and populist polls and political power through votes.

More recently and increasingly government legislators align with wealthy and influential media in spite of their claims that they do not. The clear evidence confirms otherwise as the NSW Greyhound racing ban 'backflip' confirmed.

Monumental, positive and progressive legislative change has always reflected societal and social justice change - votes for women, an end to the White Australia policy, an end to wartime conscription, an end to capital punishment, the introduction of Medicare and free education and historical environmental reforms to protect wilderness areas under international law.

The animal rights movement is as much a societal movement as the environmental movement and is closely linked to environmental and public interest movements in Australia and around the globe. The progression of animal rights takes an army of contributors and that army continues to grow and strengthen.

Animal rights is an idea whose time has come. It is a movement that has no barriers across age, economic status or ethnicity. All people care about the welfare of animals as strongly evidenced in the results from the recent federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources report, [Australia's Shifting Mindset on Farm Animal Welfare](#) concluded the majority of Australians care strongly about animal welfare, were seeking government reforms

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including transparency with housing and husbandry practices, were concerned about conflicts of interest, product labels and health.

There is a strong and growing sense and understanding of ‘sentience’ of all non-human animals - for the concept of someone not something and the uniqueness of the individual.

It is no longer acceptable that traditional farm animals raised on mass for human consumption and by-products are exempted from legislation, Codes of Practice and Standards, weak and inadequate as they are, which are intended to protect and prevent cruelty and enable enforcement and prosecution when breaches occur as is increasingly exposed not by the responsible authorities or government, but by animal activists.



Children are not born cruel and while a child may be rough in their handling of an animal this is more likely a matter of clumsiness rather than a deliberate or intentional desire to harm which often emanates from being taught and normalised rather than being inherited.

It is no longer acceptable for government to ignore the will of the people.

During the previous national review of battery cages for hens, NSW respondents to a NSW DPI online survey overwhelmingly voted in favour of outlawing battery cages for hens. These results must form part of this new and current review into battery cages for hens, and I am extremely disappointed that this current review has not seen fit to implement a similar online survey. Government's inconsistent approach to gathering public views is either an oversight or a failing of the current Select Committee.

It is no longer acceptable for government to ignore science and independent evidence in favour of government's own economic and other agenda matters.

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For the many millions of hens at the mercy of the egg industry and select legislators', **it is time to ban and outlaw battery cages for hens once and for all.**

It is no longer acceptable for government to place the rights of any industry over the rights of sentient beings and the general public. Nor, should any government be using vast amounts of public money to prop up and support such industries or to shut down those who engage in democratic fashion to oppose and expose such industries and their widespread wrongdoing.



There is a fine line between elected officials holding and expressing left, moderate or right-wing political views and actually taking on the role of lobbyists for these industries against the wishes of the general public. Regardless of political persuasion elected government is supposed to govern for the people.

Government must resist the common practice of thinking it knows best because it doesn't. Government and this Select Committee must assess all views of those you represent and act accordingly rather than act for those you favour.

As elected MP's you are well paid and this is appropriate. As Select Committee members you also receive additional remuneration for your Committee role and expected work. This is also appropriate providing you fulfil the obligations and responsibilities of your committee

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work to the highest standards as expected. This includes reading every single submission. This also means being thoroughly conversant with the applicable legislation and practices in NSW, across Australia and around the globe, and the likewise lack of legislation and practices. This also requires you to all be across all previous national battery cage review - submissions, reports and surveys and conclusions.

I am a proud grass roots animal activist of three decades of hands-on experience in a volunteer capacity across many social justice causes and predominantly causes for animals. I have instigated many campaigns and events and have supported and collaborated with many more across a very broad range of issues. Every single campaign I have managed has achieved success in better outcomes for animals and I am well across legislation and developments at local, state and federal level. My voice is articulate and one of hands on experience with advocacy, activism, rescue and rehoming.

My education includes political and sociological study and a family of government officials and support officials. My professional background includes acting as an internal Ombudsman for customers and the public in large organisations. My animal work has enabled me to collaborate with key minds and leaders in the animal rights movement. Do not make the assumption that any lack of paid animal rights work diminishes my knowledge or expertise because on the contrary, my knowledge and expertise on this subject is extensive.

I have a well-informed opinion and position and I will hold this committee to account for your work, findings and final report and recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

I am strongly opposed to the egg industry's battery cages, and I am calling on the NSW government to **outlaw battery cages for hens in NSW once and for all**. I am equally concerned about the extreme suffering and systemic cruelty experienced by all exploited hens and chicks; those raised for meat and those raised for eggs in other housing systems.

Despite the evidenced and serious welfare effects of battery cages, these cages are still legal and the most common type of housing used by the egg industry for egg laying hens.

Currently in Australia an estimated 11-12 million hens, that's more than 2 out of 3 hens, are permanently confined by the egg industry to cruel battery cages; designed to maximise the industry's egg laying production and commercial profits.

NSW is the largest producer of caged eggs in Australia, with critics previously claiming NSW had a vested interest in continuing the use of battery cages for hens. Following access to documents obtained under Freedom of Information (FOI), previous media reported (*LINK* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-21/egg-farmers-accused-of-colluding-with-nsw-government/9229242>) national efforts to overhaul welfare standards and outlaw cages for hens', had led to claims and accusations of egg producers engaging

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in “**systemic collusion with the NSW Government to deliberately thwart moves to outlaw battery hens across the country.**”

NSW as the largest producer of caged eggs in Australia, has a clear, moral and ethical responsibility to lead the way and outlaw battery cages for hens once and for all; in line with scientific evidence, progressive practices, and the expectations of the NSW public.

All egg laying hens (barn laid, free range and battery cage), suffer unspeakable misery and abhorrent cruelty, much of which is legally endorsed and sanctioned by the egg industry and government through current weak and inadequate legislation, standards and practices. The overwhelming consensus among animal welfare experts is that the welfare of hens is severely compromised with scientific studies indicating that **battery hens suffer intensely and continuously when they are confined in cages.**

Battery caged hens suffer the additional cruelty of extreme confinement in small wire cages where they are unable to perform many of their instinctive and natural behaviours - confined row after row in large sheds with thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, of other hens.

Hens are very intelligent and affectionate birds, enjoying the social companionship of their flock and the capacity to exhibit their unique and individual personalities as 'someone' not 'something'. They enjoy the simple pleasure of expressing their natural behaviours - being free to perch, nest, scratch around and forage, take dust baths, enjoy fresh air, natural and warm sunlight, and to roam freely, stretching their wings in an unrestricted, safe and sheltered environment.

Hens in battery cage, barn laid and many free-range systems spend their lives in artificially lit surroundings designed to maximise the industry's egg laying production and commercial profits. Despite the evidenced and serious welfare effects of battery cages, these cages are still legal, and the most common type of housing used by the egg industry for egg laying hens. The egg industry argues that the high laying rates in battery cages indicate healthy, productive hens – a claim strongly refuted by science and animal welfare experts who state **the welfare of caged hens is severely compromised.**

Hens are sentient beings – they are also very intelligent and affectionate birds. They enjoy the social companionship of their flock and the capacity to exhibit their unique and individual personalities as 'someone' not 'something'. They enjoy the simple pleasure of expressing their natural behaviours - being free to perch, nest, scratch around and forage, take dust baths, enjoy fresh air, natural and warm sunlight, and to roam freely, stretching their wings in an unrestricted, safe and sheltered environment.

In the production of non-human animals for human consumption and by-products, chickens raised for meat and eggs are among the most exploited and abused species in the world. Apart from the abhorrent slaughter rates, many die in cages and sheds before they reach the industry's standard slaughter age, or are cruelly killed because of disease outbreaks or when they are no longer considered commercially viable or productive - often at only 12-18 months of age.

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The egg industry has only ever made scant attempts to address the interests of the animals it mass produces and slaughters when consumer concern threatens profitability. This industry treats layer hens as mere objects, units of production, and this is well evidenced by the horrific lives these animals endure from their birth, right through to their premature deaths.

I concur with past statements made by critics claiming NSW had a vested interest in continuing the use of battery cages for hens. During the most recent Australia wide review undertaken in an effort to overhaul national welfare standards and outlaw cages for hens, I was very alarmed to read the then media reports, following access to documents obtained under Freedom of Information (FOI), ([LINK https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-21/egg-farmers-accused-of-colluding-with-nsw-government/9229242](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-21/egg-farmers-accused-of-colluding-with-nsw-government/9229242)) which led to claims and accusations of egg producers engaging in “systemic collusion with the NSW Government to deliberately thwart moves to outlaw battery hens across the country.” **It is imperative this NSW Committee ensures no repetition of similar past disruptive behaviour and actions or undue influence by the egg industry.**

A report ‘Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Poultry’, https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/822403/Report-to-NSW-DPI-on-poultry-welfare-standards-and-guidelines.pdf prepared by Ian Roth PSM BVSc GAICD, Veterinary and Animal Welfare Consultant in March 2018, for the NSW Government following the Independent NSW Consultation Process confirmed “Discussion around conventional cages for laying hens was the dominant issue at all stakeholder and community meetings”; “that the community no longer accepts conventional cages”, and that “of the 1200 responses to the NSW DPI survey and the 165,000 submissions to Animal Health Australia, 99% of respondents are reportedly opposed to conventional cages. The community social licence for conventional caged egg production appears to be continuing to erode.”

The main argument raised against conventional cages is that they do not meet the basic behavioural needs of hens. Animal welfare advocates cited the Farmed Bird Welfare Science Review (Nicol CJ et al Oct 2017) prepared for the Victorian Government to support their argument. This is a review of peer reviewed scientific literature on the care, management and slaughter of poultry. In the overview of this document it concludes that “The conventional cage prevents birds from performing basic movements essential for good health (walking, wing stretching) and denies birds the possibility of expressing their behavioural needs to roost, nest and forage, or their motivation to dust bathe due to an inherent lack of resources”.

Animal welfare organisations also cited reports from European Union (EU) countries, New Zealand and Canada (the EU Scientific Veterinary Commission Report 1996, the NZ National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Report 2012 and the Canadian National Farm Animal Care Council Report 2013), that led to these nations phasing out conventional cage system in favour of alternative systems.

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The **sentient capacities of non-human animals must be considered by decision makers** when making ethical decisions about the treatment of animals.

In 2012, an international group of eminent neuroscientists signed **The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness**, which confirmed that many animals, including all mammals and birds, possess the “neurological substrates that generate consciousness”.

If we accept animal sentience, then practices like intensive animal agriculture must be reconsidered – based on science and evidence and public expectations. In NSW, the law doesn't recognise animals as sentient. Australian law classifies animals as property and fails to recognise their sentience. This needs to change as a matter of urgency.

Currently the law defines the acceptable treatment of animals **according to their use rather than their capacity to suffer**. Many practices which would qualify as 'cruelty' under the law if performed on a dog are instead 'legal' if done to another animal species raised for human consumption or by-products.

KEY ISSUES

Battery cages cause misery, suffering and cruelty for millions of hens.

- Unnatural and artificial environments of commonly near dark conditions, often preventing eye development and the ability to rest.
- Cesspits of misery, suffering, cruelty and disease.
- Permanent confinement in cages with no enrichment preventing the capacity to express normal and instinctive behaviours.
- Extreme space limitations (less than an A4 piece of paper per hen), preventing personal space and the capacity to escape aggression and bullying.
- Wire flooring often leading to chronic pain, muscle wastage and feet and leg injuries.
- A severely reduced lifespan of 12-18 months of age.
- Around 12 million male chicks killed annually by the egg industry as wastage by live maceration or gassing.
- Cruel husbandry and industry practices and methods including general handling, debeaking, forced moulting, transport and slaughter.

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- Lack of Industry transparency or preparedness to align with wide spread consumer expectations about animal welfare and food labelling.
- Emerging cultures of hidden, systemic and violent animal abuse where whistle blowers have minimal protection or incentive to report animal cruelty.
- Environmental and biosecurity risks and impacts and a lack of monitoring and enforcement.
- Public health risks and impacts for workers, local communities and the general public.

SPECIFIC CONCERNS

Intensive and industrialised egg production includes unnatural and artificial environments of often near dark conditions preventing normal behaviour, eye development and rest.

The permanent cage confinement and space allocation for each bird is less than the size of a piece of A4 paper, and cages are only 40 cm high. Small cages and large stocking densities mean hens are unable to express normal behaviours including the ability to stretch out, flap their wings, scratch, forage, perch, nest, dust bathe, preen or exercise.

Caged hens often spend their time standing on sloping wire floors designed to facilitate egg collection. Scientific studies indicate that battery hens suffer intensely and continuously all the time they are confined in cages. Restricted movement and no exercise, constant exposure to a wire floor and lack of perches leads to serious bone and muscle weakness with many experiencing chronic pain from the development of lesions and other foot and leg problems.

Denied a normal 'personal space' caged hens experience stress and frustration. They cannot escape aggression from other hens which often leads to pecking, bullying and cannibalism. They have no nesting area and nesting before and during egg laying is a priority for hens and this deficiency causes them extreme frustration.

Each year around 12 million male chicks, unable to produce eggs, and deemed wastage by the egg industry, are killed shortly after birth by the standard industry practice of maceration or gassing.

Hens will naturally live for around 10 years, but most layer hens in Australia are sent to slaughter as soon as they exceed their productive "use by date". They are considered "spent" between 12 and 18 months of age, regardless of whether they are in a barn laid, free range, or caged system.

Cruel and legal husbandry and industry practices including, debeaking, forced moulting, cage and shed population and depopulation, general handling, transport and slaughter. Routine beak trimming or debeaking on chicks involves the practical removal

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or burning off of the upper and lower beak through the application of an electrically heated blade. Despite the fact that debeaking is known to cause acute and chronic pain (particularly in older birds) due to tissue damage and nerve injury, no State or Territory law in Australia requires pain relief to be used in conjunction with the procedure. Battery caged hens are forcefully pulled from their cages, often through cage doors so small that their bones break in the process. Hens are packed into crates and trucked (often long distances) to a slaughterhouse.

Our animal protection legislation, Codes of Practice (CoP's) and Standards are supposed to protect all animals and are designed to prevent cruelty and suffering. The 'Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act' which underpins all codes and standards is clearly inadequate. Animal welfare as expected, indeed demanded by the public, includes animals being entitled to rights, welfare and protection under the internationally recognised '**5 Freedoms**'. This **includes both physical and mental state, and good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being**. There is substantial evidence to confirm that neither the egg industry or our current legislation, CoP's or Standards reflect the intent or practical application of the internationally recognised '5 Freedoms'.

Intensive animal agriculture environments are cesspits of abnormal stress for animals, with excessive over crowded populations and stock densities, and an accumulation of faeces and urine. These intensive environments have been the petri dishes or the cesspools where diseases such as bird flu and others have occurred. Those diseases have occurred because they have been introduced by the industry itself. There has been numerous cases of disease outbreaks in egg production facilities resulting in extreme suffering and death for the birds, or an industry executed mass 'cull'.

These intensive environments promote and harbor profound animal misery, suffering, cruelty and disease, sanctioned by the industries who profit from their very existence, and our governments' who legalise them based on economic drivers. These environments are synonymous with extreme, systemic animal cruelty and abuse and are largely hidden to consumers, the communities in which they operate and the general public. There is an urgent need for real transparency, greater monitoring and better enforcement.

An October 2013 Bird Flu (H7 strain), outbreak near Young NSW resulted in many thousands of layer chickens being destroyed. The influenza broke out in the free range flock and spread to the cage egg chickens. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2013-10-15/bird-flu-outbreak-on-egg-farm-near-young-nsw/5024728> A second outbreak of bird flu was also discovered at the government-run Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, north of Young and included the culling of birds at that facility. The majority of the hens in the cages had lost most of their feathers and had very white/pale combs, indicating poor health. Others were found dead and rotting in the cages. Similar H7 avian influenza disease outbreaks occurred including at an egg farm near Maitland, in the Lower Hunter region of NSW.

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More recently, public health and more hen culling was headlined with a massive supermarket egg recall in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania, South Australia and the ACT following the detection of Salmonella egg contamination from Bridgewater Poultry in central Victoria. <https://www.smh.com.au/business/consumer-affairs/eggs-pulled-from-supermarket-shelves-after-potential-salmonella-scare-20190321-p5163p.html> Five people aged in their 20s to 80s contracted salmonella enteritidis linked to the eggs and in NSW, investigations occurred involving outbreaks on five smaller poultry farms where there was a potential links between one of those producers and the premises in Victoria. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-23/salmonella-egg-contamination-could-cause-bird-cull/10931996>

Consumers are increasingly making product choices on the basis of personal ethics and health. The relevant watchdog authorities have through various cases confirmed they will not tolerate consumers being misled or deceived in terms of how food is grown and raised in respect to packaging, marketing and advertising. Egg industry food labels are still however very confusing and false and misleading claims continue as evidenced by the ACCC case against Snowdale Holdings Pty Ltd (Snowdale) for making false or misleading representations that its eggs were 'free range. Snowdale is one of Western Australia's largest egg producers. It supplies eggs labelled as cage, barn laid and free range to various retailers.

The 'slaughtering' factor should also be incorporated into food labelling in the near future. Irrespective of a consumer purchasing from a supermarket, a butcher or a market, the details of how the species has been grown, raised or slaughtered or where it has come from is still largely unclear or unknown. The consumer is therefore being denied adequate information to enable them to make informed choices.

Environmentally, intensive animal agriculture waste, pollution and contamination has consequences, risks and impacts such as odour, disease, biosecurity, vermin and contamination of soil and water, (surface water, ground water, natural water bodies), groundwater dependent ecosystems and ecological communities.

The physical and emotional health of poultry workers and the local communities where intensive facilities operate is a serious issue and there is a complete lack of credible study, investigation and reporting on these important matters in Australia. Currently we are reliant on overseas studies.

The Brazilian Journal of Poultry Science, Print version ISSN 1516-635X On-line version ISSN 1806-9061, Rev. Bras. Cienc. Avic. vol.20 no.1 Campinas Jan./Mar. 2018 published a report http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1516-635X2018000100111 involving a study conducted on eight poultry farms in Lahore and Sheikhpura to monitor environmental conditions, determine workers' health status and assess the implementation of standard management practices.

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Seventy-one respondents were selected for the health assessment survey and lung function test. The results showed that the evaluated air-quality parameters, except for temperature and humidity, were well below the permissible occupational limits

Poultry producers are also associated with a number of local and regional environmental risks and impacts. Poor manure management practices give rise to soil and water pollution. The use of pesticides and insecticides adversely affect the quality of nearby surface and ground water resources. Odor emissions, due to release of gases including ammonia (NH₃) and hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), along with some volatile organic compounds (VOCs), significantly affect the environment and health of poultry workers and confinement areas with high concentration of poultry or other livestock have been associated with frequent complaints of odour nuisance, which has been linked with health symptoms, including headache, irritation of eyes, nose and throat, and drowsiness.

The main air pollutants - collectively referred as bio-aerosols - present in poultry production and hatcheries include poultry dust (mainly produced from microorganisms and their metabolites), pathogens, endotoxins, as well as NH₃ and carbon dioxide (CO₂), as a consequence of excreta decomposition, respiration of poultry and other operations in the animal confinement buildings. These and others factors like manure, litter, feather, fragments and skin of animals are associated with adverse environmental and health impacts.

Epidemiological studies have shown that acute and chronic respiratory disease symptoms are prevalent in poultry-farm workers due to exposure to environmental conditions and live birds in confinement buildings. Hypersensitive lung diseases, such as extrinsic allergic alveolitis, and other acute respiratory symptoms (coughing, wheezing, and respiratory distress) have been associated with the inhalation of organic dust for prolonged exposure periods. Chronic respiratory disorders are also prevalent among poultry-farm workers, with 'ODTS (organic dust toxic syndrome)' and asthma being the most common. It is reported that 20% of the poultry-farm workers suffer from acute respiratory disorders, exhibiting symptoms such as wheezing, cough, phlegm, and sputum.

Physical hazards present in the work environment of poultry farms include heat stress, heat exhaustion, high noise levels, heat-induced dermatosis, high temperature and humidity in indoor confinement buildings. Chemical hazards result in acute and chronic respiratory diseases due to poultry dust exposure, skin and eye diseases due to the exposure to toxic gases originating from manure handling operations, immune diseases, and exposure to detergents, pesticides and disinfectants. Additionally, VOCs have also been detected in blood samples of poultry-farm workers. The incidence of acute and chronic respiratory disorders such as wheezing, phlegm, congestion, dyspnea, upper respiratory tract irritation and other skin irritations in poultry-farm workers is mainly due to occupational exposure to chemical and biological hazards.

Zoonotic diseases and infections (biological hazards) are transferred between animals and humans via different routes and infective agents, including bacteria, fungus, endotoxins, and viruses. Microbial inflammatory agents (such as endotoxins) have also been linked with a decrease in airflow and related respiratory symptoms. The (1/3)-beta-D-glucan present in the cell wall of fungi is another source of biological hazard. Its

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adverse health impacts involve suppression of the immune system and increase in the sensitivity to allergens (Ajetomobi et al., 2010). Other types of biological agents, including primary and opportunistic biological agents, are associated with the prevalence of multi-factorial environmental diseases. Some strains of microorganisms are capable of surviving in an airborne state for several minutes and can disperse in the vicinity of the poultry farm areas. A pertinent example is the mouth and foot virus, which can disperse to an aerial distance of 50 km. Bacteria of the genus *Staphylococcus*, which are commonly present in animal production houses, has been found to occur about 500m downwind of poultry barns at high concentrations of about 4000 cfu/m³.

Moreover, occupational hazards to which poultry-farm workers are exposed also include ergonomic factors that involve back pains, mainly due to wrong work postures and moving activities. It has been demonstrated that farm management practices can have a profound impact on workers' health in numerous ways.

Another study undertaken in South Africa 'Respiratory health effects in poultry workers', Article (PDF Available) in *Current Allergy and Clinical Immunology* 27(2):116-124 · June 2014 confirmed similar health risks and impacts.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262938503_Respiratory_health_effects_in_poultry_workers

There is a noted increase in exposure by animal activists to cruel housing and husbandry practices in intensive animal agriculture – sadly, much of which is legal and government sanctioned. These exposures confirm the lack of monitoring and enforcement being undertaken by the relevant authorities when planning proposals are approved – often at local government council level. No one is accountable.

One prominent and current NSW example is the Lakesland Hens case which involved 'free-range'. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/lakesland-egg-farmer-convicted-of-serious-animal-cruelty-20190430-p51ipt.html>

Of the hens still alive, the RSPCA said most were "underweight to emaciated" and half were suffering "a respiratory disease with mucoid discharge from the nares [nostrils] and mouth." Additionally, "all the birds had severe lice infestations and appeared to be hungry and very thirsty, spending most of the time attempting to drink from the nipple drinkers and search for food". Inspectors also identified severe issues with condition of the shed where the birds were kept, from "poor ventilation, poor substrate, broken feeders and water pipes" to "dangerous wire causing the birds to become trapped and the deceased bodies left to decompose amongst the hens." In addition to the 1000 hens already found dead in the shed, all 4000 of the live hens were destroyed by authorities after tests of the flock returned positive results for Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT) – a highly contagious, respiratory disease caused by a herpes virus.

A more recent expose published by Animal Liberation <https://www.animal-lib.org.au/new/layer-hen-depopulation-break-up-with-eggs/> involved the depopulation of Victorian egg laying hens and confirmed the following distressing facts:

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Final Days - The Victorian egg farm featured in this expose withheld food for days leading up to depopulation to save on costs. As a result, many of the hens died of starvation, whilst others resorted to cannibalism of their cage mates.

Depopulation - As the hens are rounded up, their fragile bodies are subject to rough handling by contract labourers. The hens can be heard screaming in fear, as they are ripped from their cages. Due to being deemed "useless", the workers have no regard for their welfare and can be seen bashing them against the cages, whilst regularly swearing at them for trying to escape. Further, the workers can be seen mocking and abusing the hens for amusement. They are thrown, hit, held up by their wings, and have their necks broken - all while other workers watch on and laugh. Consequently, many of the hens are left to suffer with fractured bones and ultimately die slow and painful.

Gassing - According to the Australian Egg Industry, the most "humane" slaughter practice is on-site carbon dioxide gassing. This contradicts researchers, who state that death by CO2 induced hypoxia is a highly distressing and uncomfortable way to die. From the footage, hens can be seen thrashing around, gasping for air and shrieking, for over two minutes before drawing their final breaths.

OTHER

The following matters are those I would ask the committee to thoroughly consider in its deliberations, report and recommendations to government.

- Obvious links to Opportunities
- The public voice and the rise of public interest
- Public money use on cleaning up breaches, monitoring and enforcement
- Animal activists and whistle blowers and Ag Gag
- Sentience bill and wellbeing and non-human rights
- Right to Rescue bill
- Inquiry into worker and community health and funding for studies. This significantly impacts rural communities.
- Issues with license monitoring and enforcement
- Issues with DA assessment and approval - planning instruments and climate change

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- Dissolving of OEH & OLG - less oversight, monitoring, enforcement and accountability
- Emerging cultures of hidden, systemic and violent animal abuse where whistle blowers have minimal protection or incentive to report animal cruelty.
- Environmental and biosecurity risks and impacts and a lack of monitoring and enforcement.

End ...