

**INQUIRY INTO PROVISIONS OF THE RIGHT TO FARM
BILL 2019**

Name: Ms Kimberley Constantine

Date Received: 30 September 2019

Partially
Confidential

30 September, 2019

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SUBMISSION: RE THE RIGHT TO FARM BILL 2019

From what I've read, the 'Right To Farm Bill' is an aggressive agricultural gagging attempt that I believe is completely out of line with community expectations for animal welfare. There is serious concern that this Bill will impact on civil liberties, including the right to peaceful protest and the ability of whistleblowers to report animal cruelty.

I find that the current government is only concerned with profit ('the economy' - that is repeatedly referenced ad nauseum). Revelations about the routine cruelty inflicted on animals in factory farms and slaughterhouses have shocked caring Australians in recent years. As consumers are given more information as to where their meat is coming from and how animals are treated, they are wanting answers that our government just doesn't want to give. Rather than address these concerns, some industry bodies and politicians are now looking to their American counterparts for inspiration on how to pull back down the veil of secrecy that has protected animal abusing industries for so long, hence this bill. When do we start making our own decisions as a country, rather than as an American mini-me. I did think we still lived in a democracy, but government actions like this makes me seriously wonder who we have in power.

Australian animals raised for food are left startlingly exposed by cruelty laws. It's legal and standard to treat them in ways that, were you to do the same to a dog or cat, you could be up for cruelty charges. The only reason the public ever become aware of this routine cruelty is because of whistleblowers and activists being able to document it.

The Bill will make aggravated trespass punishable by up to \$13,200 and 12 months imprisonment. At the moment, the maximum punishment is \$5,500 and no jail time. This is more than doubling the existing penalty. The Bill will make an individual accused of aggravated trespass face up to a \$22,000 fine and up to 3 years imprisonment if they are in the company of two or more people.

The Bill also changes the definition of aggravated trespass to include "wilfully or negligently" releasing livestock.

There is no evidence that there is a need to increase punishment for farm trespass, or that this increase will deter trespassers. Previous attempts by the government to stifle whistleblowers only led to more community concern regarding animal welfare.

By making things so much harder for people to follow their conscience and intervene in exposing animal cruelty, this bill and therefore this government is colluding in its horrific cover up. Just watch a few of these videos below to understand that these shocking acts of cruelty would never see the light of day if this bill goes through:

Aside from animal welfare issues, the bill seeks to provide protection for farmers against nuisance lawsuits, at the expense of the rights of individual property owners. While the Bill focusses on the trespass threat posed by animal advocates, this is inconsistent with a statement by NSW Police last month that "the majority of trespass on rural properties was due to illegal hunting not animal activism."

I realise that those in the intensive farming industry have a right to carry on their business...but why are there no rights for the animals themselves? They give up their lives for human consumption, so at the very least they should die with dignity. Why are these businesses not held accountable for the disgraceful mistreatment of animals? Any ethical business should surely welcome CCTV cameras on their premises, not cry out for more secrecy. While this bill is being couched as addressing 'trespass' or 'biosecurity' concerns, it is about one thing only - keeping consumers in the dark about cruel practices.

I may not be a farmer or a politician, but I do know that the only laws that need to change are the ones that are failing to protect animals from cruelty. Shame on this government for protecting only that which affects the bottom line and ignoring what is right and just. It makes me ashamed that this is even happening in my country.