

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

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Partially  
Confidential

The last 20 yrs I've lived on a rural property on the south coast of NSW. In that time I've observed bovines ('lawnmowers') come to my backyard; itchy, they rub their bodies against trees; chickens who, unlike many of us humans, retire as it gets dark and rise early, geese who walk along the dirt road from a neighbours house and wait for me to drop lettuce leaves or a slice of bread, sheep who lie down on my front porch; the neighbours horses and a goat named Grace are also cute. One of my fondest memories was October 2006; a breach birth of a baby bull; he couldn't walk at first. But I was able source colostrum and bottle fed him a powdered formula and he became strong. I named him 'Hercules'. I'd open the front door for Hercules and he'd enter the house; possibly the only calf to step inside a house that isn't a slaughterhouse. My rooster 'Albert' sits on my lap; he's warm; like a heater. Most farm animals aren't so lucky; laws allow farmers to maximise profit at animals expense; the result: animals are often severely and intensively confined, denied their natural behavioural instincts and quality of life. These animals are abused to such an extent that if done to a cat or dog the perpetrator would probably face criminal prosecution. Growing up on Sydney's lower North Shore I had ducks as pets; fluffy, yellow ducklings that would swim in a blow up kids pond. Most ducks aren't so lucky; reared in sheds with thousands of others these waterbirds have no water to swim in. When I was older I had a dog named 'Plato'; he was cute. But I don't see why cats and dogs are loved while pigs, bovines, chickens, ducks and sheep etc., are excluded from our moral compass. The more people know about the animals whose flesh ends up on their plate and the methods used in mass milk and egg production the more they might rethink their purchases and the more farmers and industries might have to change.

Out of sight and out of mind; that's the way farmers want it: keep consumers oblivious to what happens behind the closed doors of factory farms and abattoirs.

Under the guise of enhancing animal welfare and biosecurity, the Right to Farm Bill aims at severely criminalising investigations into cruelty and neglect and censoring evidence gathered in such investigations so it won't reach the media and general public.

Undercover footage of egregious animal abuse in factory farms, abattoirs and other animal enterprises is one of the main means of advocacy used by animal activists; undercover investigations have exposed horrific conditions of about 15 piggeries leading to the closure of two,

Obtaining undercover footage via trespass is illegal, publishing the footage is not. Footage, even if obtained illegally, can be submitted as evidence in a criminal trial. In 2001 the High Court ruled the ABC be permitted to broadcast undercover footage obtained from inside a Tasmanian possum abattoir. Justice Kirby: "The concerns of a governmental and political character must not be narrowly confined. To do so would be to restrict, or inhibit, the operation of the representative democracy that is envisaged by the Constitution. Within that democracy, concerns about animal welfare are clearly legitimate matters of public debate across the nation. So are concerns about the export of animals and animal products. Many advances in animal welfare have occurred only because of public debate and political pressure from special interest groups. The activities of such groups have sometimes pricked the conscience of human beings. Parliamentary democracies, such as Australia, operate effectively when they are stimulated by debate promoted by community groups. To be successful, such debate often requires media attention. Improvements in the condition of circus animals, in the transport of live sheep for export and in the condition of battery hens followed such community debate. Furthermore, antivivisection and vegetarian groups are entitled, in our representative democracy, to promote their causes, enlisting media coverage, including by the appellant. The form of government created by the Constitution is not confined to debates about popular or congenial topics,

reflecting majority or party wisdom. Experience teaches that such topics change over time. In part, they do so because of general discussion in the mass media.”

It's no surprise that a key feature of the Right to Farm Bill is a requirement that all footage be given to police within 48 hours; all evidence must be handed in, none of it can be given to the media or published in any way.

Western Australia Senator Chris Back, a supporter of the Right to Farm Bill argues it would allow authorities to investigate instead of the footage being exploited to misinform the public and fuel biased campaigns.

But forbidding the media to receive undercover footage stops public and consumers from knowing what goes on behind the scenes; which is what farmers want.

In regard to matters being resolved by police, much of the cruelty and abuse shown in such footage is legal and considered standard industry practice. When incidents occur that are illegal and in violation of Codes of Practice activists hand footage to the authorities,

The proposed Right to Farm Bill, if enacted would deliberately keep Australians uninformed, choking public debate and discussion.

Pressure from consumers and retailers can force much needed change such as the phasing out of stalls for pigs and cages for hens.

But as long as footage is withheld, the public is unaware and it's business as usual for the meat, pork, poultry, egg and other businesses that profit on the misery of animals.

If I were a farmer caught treating animals despicably I'd thank activists for trespassing; they'd be doing me a favour. I'd say to them; 'You're right; I have to change'.