

Submission
No 255

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

I am opposed to the Right to Farm Bill for the following reasons:

1. The penalties for trespass are ridiculously extreme - \$22,000 and/or a 3 year jail sentence. Compare that to the penalty for aggravated animal cruelty, which is \$22,000 and/or 2 years imprisonment. Do you really think that trespassing onto a farmer's land is anyway comparable to starving/ beating/ abusing an animal?

2. The Bill threatens our right to protest in general. In Schedule 2 of the Bill the definition of 'inclosed lands' and of 'hindering a business' are too broad to simply apply to animal activists entering a farm. It could easily apply to anyone holding a peaceful protest on any sort of private land. The right to peaceful protest is an important part of our democracy.

3. The Bill will make it impossible for animal cruelty to be detected on farms by members of the public. Recently, a NSW commercial chicken farmer was convicted of aggravated animal abuse after he starved and neglected thousands of chickens (who subsequently had to be euthanised). The only reason this man was caught abusing these animals was because someone snuck onto his farm and took footage, which was released to social media and went viral. After that, the RSPCA acted. How was this man allowed to abuse these animals for so long? How come a member of the public was forced to trespass and take footage in order for anything to be done? I always assumed government agencies like the RSPCA conducted surprise audits and inspections to catch farmers like this, but if this story (and many others that I've witnessed online) is anything to go by, then apparently not.

Trespassers who enter farmland with the intent of monitoring animal welfare should not be punished. They are doing the work that agencies like the RSPCA SHOULD be doing. They are acting out of concern. If agencies like the RSPCA can only be prompted to react after a member of the public has had to break the law to capture footage of abuse, this Bill will allow cruel farmers to neglect and abuse their animals without consequence.

If you are to introduce such strict laws against trespass, then I would expect you to amp up the laws against animal cruelty - harsher penalties for animal abuse/neglect and stricter monitoring conditions of farms. It's only fair. The general public have a right to see what happens to animals on farms, and farmers should be heavily scrutinised to ensure they adhere to the strictest welfare standards possible.