

Submission
No 256

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Sir

I write in support of the Right to Farm legislation.

My wife and I own and operate a small farm in the Southern Tablelands of NSW, an activity we have pursued for the last forty years, firstly as a second occupation whilst we were both working in the public and private sectors and more recently as a full-time occupation for both of us. Over this time we have seen the administrative rigours of day to day farming steadily increase, especially the increasingly complex and intrusive compliance burden imposed by a bureaucracy with its own growth agenda and a city-centric legislature.

The registration phase of this submission is a clear example of this latter failure to understand rural communities and economies. I could not proceed with this submission unless I entered the name of my suburb or city. Our nearest neighbour lives 15 kms away, the nearest hamlet is 70 kms away, the nearest town 80 kms and the nearest city 150 kms. One cannot but think that this small inconsideration is symptomatic of the wider failure of the bureaucracy and politicians in general.

We also deserve consideration and representation who live outside the suburban conurbations and who only grow the food you eat!

Of course, apart from the administrative and compliance loads, we farmers also have to battle the uncertainties of weather (you may have heard of some minor inconvenience we are currently suffering in respect of rain, or more accurately, its absence), the environment, markets that are uncertain at best and the active malice of those who see us as despoilers of the environment and/or transgressors of their particular (and often peculiar) political beliefs and convictions. I speak here of both the general public and the bureaucracy. Our own experience includes facing down armed trespassers, never-ending weed invasion from uncontrolled public lands, collecting dead and dying stock killed by domestic and wild dogs bred in adjacent National Parks, battling bureaucracy in the form of local councils determined to remove farmers from the landscape with the help of NSW Planning Legislation and rural management bureaucracies that blithely impose onerous and crippling administrative and operational obligations on struggling farmers whilst simultaneously withdrawing support services or making them unworkable and absolving themselves of reciprocal obligations on their own (often adjoining) lands.

However, this submission is more concerned with the proposal to control the more extreme elements of the general public who believe their convictions on a range of subjects entitle them to trespass, damage and trample at will.

Trespass is a serious crime whatever its motive but more especially when it is carried out with malice aforethought. It matters little whether it is home or farm invasion. Rural industries targeted by activist trespass groups are often exposed to more than mere destruction and a sense of violation. Uncontrolled access may well compromise biosecurity and/or infection controls leading to more serious and longer term losses.

As we have attempted to point out above, farmers are and historically have always been under-represented and under-resourced and in recent times increasingly over-regulated. To compound this inequity, it appears that recent efforts to provide greater protection to farmers from the more radical elements in society through the Right to Farm Bill are under threat.

It seems incredible to the point of political hypocrisy that we have a legislature that on one hand imposes the Biosecurity Act on farmers but which then shies away from legislation that supports them in its application.

Surely a rational society that imposes strict and onerous operational legislation on farmers must impose the same or greater stricture on those who, convictions and beliefs notwithstanding, consciously and maliciously ignore the same legislation.

Quite simply, The Right to Farm Bill is essential to provide consistent, integrated protection to farmers and to secure the food chain, which we all acknowledge to be under current and future threat.