

**Submission
No 321**

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

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I am writing about the proposed "right to farm" bill currently before the NSW parliament. I am hugely concerned about this bill for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I live in regional NSW and am a huge supporter of local farmers and local businesses. But I am also aware of how little protection animals get in terms of their welfare in practical terms. As a consumer I am deeply concerned about the welfare of animals used for human consumption. While the DPI and the RSPCA have responsibilities for animal welfare protection, they are hugely under resourced and underfunded. When it comes to animal welfare, animal activists play an important role in bringing welfare issues to light. This is no different to the role shareholder activists and whistleblowers play in various other industries. Despite all the media hype over the past six months or so there has been no "violence" or "terrorism" involved in the protests that have been undertaken.

There are already penalties in place for trespassing. The new penalties seem grossly heavy handed compared to other trespass infractions. Jail time of up to three years and \$22K is vastly out of step with current trespass laws for other forms of trespass. In fact, farmers could see these laws used against them when exercising their own rights to peaceful protest in movements such as lock the gate, anti mining protests etc.

If these laws were being targetted at any defined minority group such as christians, LGBTI or other similar groups it would be clear that they were out of step with the values of a democratic community. It appears that being identified as vegan could lead to unfair laws being used against you. There is also nasty rhetoric being used quite openly against individuals identifying as vegans.

Instead of imposing draconian laws like this, how about the agricultural industry work to stay in keeping with the values of consumers. How about the industry become more transparent and principled in areas such as animal welfare and environmental impact. How about reconsidering the PR implications of working behind locked gates and under cover of darkness and secrecy. How about building an industry that will be sustainable into the future instead of hiding in the past?