

## **LIBERAL AND NATIONALS MEMBERS' MINORITY REPORT**

*Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture.*

### **1.1 Members' view**

This Minority Report represents the position of the Liberal and Nationals Members of the *Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture*. Liberal and Nationals members are unable to support the final report of the Inquiry for the following reasons:

- i) The Committee Report is biased in that it gives undue attention to the motivations of animal activists, conveying an impression of support towards the illegal actions of animal activists;
- ii) The Committee Report does not acknowledge that the ultimate goal of most animal activist activity is not improving animal welfare outcomes in livestock farming but to end livestock farming altogether;
- iii) The Committee Report has been influenced by the Andrews Labor Government, evidenced by the support shown towards animal activists by Government Members;
- iv) The Committee Report gives credence to the claims of animal activists in regard to legal farming practices being cruel;
- v) The Committee Report does not adequately discuss or acknowledge the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian Agriculture;
- vi) The Committee Report deviated from the Terms of Reference and failed to respect the intentions of Parliament in establishing the Inquiry;
- vii) Recommendation 1 provides additional legal protections for animal activists that illegally trespass on farming land;
- viii) Recommendation 10, 12, and 14 are outside the Terms of Reference, were not adequately canvassed with industry representatives throughout the course of the Inquiry and do not respect the voice of industry;
- ix) The Committee Report does not propose recommendations that adequately ensure animal activists are appropriately punished for illegal activities, nor protect farmers from these illegal animal activist activities;
- x) The Committee Report does not acknowledge Australia's strong animal welfare laws and our international reputation as leaders in animal welfare; and
- xi) The Committee Report does not acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of farmers do the right thing.

## 1.2 Terms of Reference

On 1 May 2019, the Legislative Council resolved that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee inquire into, consider and report, by Thursday, 28 November 2019, on the effectiveness of legislation and other measures to prevent and deter activities by unauthorised persons on agricultural and associated industries and in particular, the Committee should –

1. consider –
  - a. the type and prevalence of unauthorised activity on Victorian farms and related industries, and the application of existing legislation;
  - b. the workplace health and safety and biosecurity risks, and potential impacts of animal activist activity on Victorian farms, to Victoria's economy and international reputation;
  - c. animal activists' compliance with the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, Livestock Management Act 2010, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986;
  - d. the civil or criminal liability of individuals and organisations who promote or organise participation in unauthorised animal activism activities;
  - e. analyse the incidences and responses of other jurisdictions in Australia and internationally; and
  - f. provide recommendations on how the Victorian Government and industry could improve protections for farmers' privacy, businesses, and the integrity of our biosecurity system and animal welfare outcomes, whether through law reform or other measures.

On 13 August 2019, the Legislative Council agreed to a motion extending the reporting date for the Inquiry's final report from 28 November 2019 to 1 February 2020.

### 1.3 Recommendation Summary

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS	MINORITY RECOMMENDATIONS
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1:</b> That in the context of the review of the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i> the Victorian Government consider the need to codify public interest exemptions in the <i>Surveillance Devices Act 1999</i>.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 1:</b> <i>Strongly Oppose.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b> That the Victorian Government instruct relevant regulatory bodies to collect data that distinguishes between livestock theft committed by animal rights activists and livestock theft committed by non-activists. This data should then inform policy development in this area.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 2:</b> <i>That the Victorian Government instructs relevant regulatory bodies to collect data that distinguishes between livestock theft and trespass committed by animal rights activists and livestock theft and trespass committed by non-activists. This data should then inform policy development in this area.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b> That Agriculture Victoria conduct an audit of the number of biosecurity management plans in place in animal agriculture businesses in Victoria. The Victorian Government should follow up this audit with assistance to enable those businesses without one to implement a biosecurity management plan.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 3:</b> <i>That the Victorian Government provide monetary assistance to farmers wishing to develop or update biosecurity management plans.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4:</b> That the Victorian Government review the <i>Livestock Disease Control Act 1994</i> with a view to the creation of an offence for all visitors/trespassers non-compliance with a biosecurity management plan, including a requirement that all visitors/trespassers must comply with plans. In cases of trespass, it should be clear that there is no requirement for business owners to have explained the biosecurity management plan to those trespassing</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 4:</b> <i>Support.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5:</b> That the proposed new biosecurity offence include an on-the-spot fine, similar to the New South Wales model, for non-compliance with biosecurity management plans.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 5:</b> <i>Support.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 6:</b> That Agriculture Victoria display online information about animal agriculture standard practices and related legislation and regulations.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 6:</b> <i>Support.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 7:</b> That Agriculture Victoria and PrimeSafe work with industry to collect examples of benchmark, high-quality animal welfare and biosecurity activities in animal agriculture to better inform the community of agricultural practices.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 7:</b> <i>Support.</i></p>

<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 8:</b> As a continuation of Recommendation 6, that Agriculture Victoria make information about the ‘compliance continuum’ more accessible on its website. This would help the public better understand the approach regulators take regarding breaches of animal welfare regulations and standards.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 8:</b> As a continuation of Recommendation 6, that Agriculture Victoria make information about the ‘compliance continuum’ more accessible on its website. <del>This would help the public better understand the approach regulators take regarding breaches of animal welfare regulations and standards.</del></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 9:</b> That the Victorian Government express its support to the Commonwealth Government for the creation of an Australian Commission for Animal Welfare, in order to expedite the process for the agreement of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 9:</b> That the Victorian Government encourage the Agriculture Minister’s Forum to expedite the process for the development of the Australian Animal Welfare Standard and Guidelines.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 10:</b> That the Victorian Government, in the absence of approved Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines incorporate existing animal welfare elements of industry quality assurance schemes into new codes of practice as part of its modernisation of the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i>.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 10:</b> That the Victorian Government, in the absence of approved Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines and <b>with the support of the relevant industry peak body</b>, incorporate existing animal welfare elements of industry quality assurance schemes into new codes of practice as part of its modernisation of the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i>.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 11:</b> That the Victorian Government consider its modernisation of the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i> to be a matter of priority.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 11:</b> Support.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 12:</b> That the Victorian Government conduct an examination of alternative practices used around the world in the treatment of live male chicks in the egg industry and the use of blunt force trauma on goats, pigs, and cows with a view of adopting ‘world’s best’ practice. These standards should be higher than the existing codes of practice in the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i>.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 12:</b> Oppose.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 13:</b> That any new codes of practice in the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i> include appropriate penalties for non-compliance.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 13:</b> Support.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 14:</b> That following consultation with industry, unions and other relevant stakeholders, the Victorian Government consider the implementation of closed-circuit television cameras in Victorian abattoirs with a legislative model similar to the <i>Mandatory Use of Closed-Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018</i>.</p>	<p><b>MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 14:</b> That following consultation with industry, unions and other relevant stakeholders, the Victorian Government provide monetary assistance for voluntary adoption of closed-circuit television cameras in Victorian abattoirs.</p>

**RECOMMEDATION 15:** That Agriculture Victoria conduct an audit of its responses to substantiated animal welfare complaints in 2019 to determine if the appropriate action was taken in each case. The results of the audit should be published on Agriculture Victoria’s website. The results should be deidentified to ensure no breach of privacy occurs.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 15:**

- a) *That Agriculture Victoria conduct an audit of its responses to substantiated animal welfare complaints in 2019 to determine if the appropriate action was taken in each case. The results of the audit should be published on Agriculture Victoria’s website. The results should be deidentified to ensure no breach of privacy occurs.*
- b) ***That the appropriate authority(ies) conduct an audit(audits) of the responses of police and the judiciary to instances of trespass and theft by animal activists.***

**1.3.1 Additional Recommendations**

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 16:** That the Victorian Government requests the Judicial College of Victoria to provide education and training to magistrates and judges about consequences and impacts of farm trespass and animal activism, particularly those undertaking circuit work in regional courts.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 17:** That the Victorian Government investigate statutory minimum penalties for trespass and theft with a view to implementing statutory minimum penalties when a threshold of physical or financial damage has been inflicted.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 18:** That the Victorian Government legislates to re-affirm the right of farmers to use animals in agriculture.

**1.4 Comments on Recommendations**

1.4.1 **RECOMMENDATION 1:** That in the context of the review of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* the Victorian Government consider the need to codify public interest exemptions in the *Surveillance Devices Act 1999*.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 1:** Oppose the Committee’s recommendation.

**Rationale**

Liberal and Nationals Members are disappointed that Government Members have chosen to use the Inquiry as an opportunity to recommend legislative protections for animal activists that illegally trespass on farms or businesses to install surveillance equipment.

Recommendation 1 does not fall within the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference *part f* requests the Committee to, *provide recommendations on how the Victorian*

*Government and industry could improve protections for farmers' privacy, businesses, and the integrity of our biosecurity system and animal welfare outcomes. Part f* requires the Committee to give consideration to all of these factors in any recommendations that are made. Recommendation 1 is focused solely on perceived animal welfare outcomes at great expense to farmers' privacy, failing to satisfy the intention of *part f*.

By making this recommendation the Committee has either ignorantly or consciously accepted the argument of animal activists that their sole goal is to improve animal welfare outcomes. Improving animal welfare outcomes on farms is clearly not the primary agenda of animal activists. During the hearings, the Inquiry heard from numerous activists who declared their desire to bring an end to the animal agriculture industry in totality.

For instance, when asked whether she would “*prefer to see no animal meat production*” and for “*all of us to be on a plant-based diet*”, Animal Liberation Victoria Founder, Patricia Mark said “*absolutely*.”<sup>1</sup>

Chris Delforce of Aussie farms said:

As my personal ideal world, we would not be breeding and killing animals when we can live perfectly happily and healthily without doing so.<sup>2</sup>

David Leyden said:

I think that the Government should impose a tax on meat products, particularly because animal agriculture is the leading cause of deforestation and the number one driver of climate change, and climate change is going to impact us all sooner rather than later.<sup>3</sup>

I would like to see the Government assist farmers' transition to more ethical systems of food production and for the Government to invest in R and D for plant-based meat substitutes and things that people would like to eat in place of animals.<sup>4</sup>

Jan Kendall said:

Do I believe they should be stopped (farming animals)? In my dreams, perhaps yes, because it would end this cruelty, but I think it is going to happen anyway.<sup>5</sup>

Ms Patricia Mark, Founder, Animal Liberation Victoria:

And with all our taxes, I know that is how I want my taxes to be used—to help these farmers to transition into a more sustainable and definitely more ethical and more peaceful way of life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Mark, Founder, Animal Liberation Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 4 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Delforce, Executive Director, Aussie Farms, public hearing, Melbourne, 4 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> David Leyden, public hearing, Melbourne, 4 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Kendall, public hearing, Melbourne, 4 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Mark, Founder, Animal Liberation Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 4 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 39.

Nichola Donovan said:

I do think it is quite inevitable that humans will have to move away from killing animals, because humans need to move away from violence.<sup>7</sup>

It (animal agriculture) will end, I believe. It is inevitable<sup>8</sup>

Abby Zonino said:

Animals are not property, objects or means for a profit; they are living, sentient beings who want to experience joy and have the ability to live their lives free from dominion and exploitation. They create lifelong bonds with their friends and family members and are far emotionally superior to human animals.<sup>9</sup>

The Liberal and Nationals Members of the Committee have concluded that animal activists are driven primarily by a desire to end the practice of farming animals, a fact inadequately considered in Chapter 5 of the Report.

1.4.2 **RECOMMENDATION 2:** That the Victorian Government instruct relevant regulatory bodies to collect data that distinguishes between livestock theft committed by animal rights activists and livestock theft committed by non-activists. This data should then inform policy development in this area.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 2:** That the Victorian Government instructs relevant regulatory bodies to collect data that distinguishes between livestock theft **and trespass** committed by animal rights activists and livestock theft **and trespass** committed by non-activists. This data should then inform policy development in this area.

### **Rationale**

Liberal and Nationals Members sought to make sensible amendments to Recommendation 2 to ensure that the desired data was collected in cases of on-farm trespass in addition to livestock theft. As reflected in the voting record, these sensible amendments were not supported by the Committee.

Australian Dairy Farmers said:

The Victorian Government needs to provide more transparency around convictions and sentencing for farm trespass. Where possible this should be reported consistent with ABS standards to provide a foundation for aggregation and reporting nationally. Consideration should also be given to the development of a national database that publicly identifies individuals and organisations found guilty of farm trespass. This would help farmers and businesses with their recruitment and purchasing decisions in the future.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Nichola Donovan, public hearing, Melbourne, 4 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Abby Zonino, public hearing, Melbourne, 4 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Dairy Farmers, *submission 272*, p. 7.

1.4.3 **RECOMMENDATION 3:** That Agriculture Victoria conduct an audit of the number of biosecurity management plans in place in animal agriculture businesses in Victoria. The Victorian Government should follow up this audit with assistance to enable those businesses without one to implement a biosecurity management plan.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 3:** That the Victorian Government provide monetary assistance to farmers wishing to develop or update biosecurity management plans.

#### **Rationale**

The Liberal and Nationals Members do not believe an audit of biosecurity management plans is appropriate until assistance and guidance regarding obligations to maintain a biosecurity management plan is better communicated to farming businesses.

Throughout the Inquiry the Committee heard how the need for and requirements of a biosecurity management plan differed between industries.

Australian Dairy Farmers said:

The Victorian Government, through Agriculture Victoria, should continue to support the adoption of farm biosecurity planning and practice by providing ongoing funding of the Dairy Biosecurity Builder tool. This would enable farmers to understand and adapt to increasing biosecurity risks posed by animal activists and other sources.<sup>11</sup>

Mr Michael Rosier, Acting Executive Director, Biosecurity Services, Biosecurity and Agriculture Services, Agriculture Victoria said:

In terms of advice to the sector, if people or producers are connected with farming associations, then they will obviously be able to get advice and information through the channels. Really, we would advise producers to have a farm plan. They should have a biosecurity plan and a farm management plan. So, it is really around producers.<sup>12</sup>

Leonard Vallance, President, VFF Livestock Group said:

Currently, Victorian farmers are offered little protection against deliberate acts of lawbreaking; trespassing and livestock theft during a farm invasion are not covered appropriately under Victoria's trespass and biosecurity laws. Both New South Wales and Queensland State Governments have introduced stronger penalties for trespassing, strengthening their state's biosecurity defence and security for their farmers.

This submission is not about suppressing individual beliefs and freedom of speech, it is about setting the course for a future that safeguards Victoria's biosecurity status, its food and fibre

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Mr Michael Rosier, Acting Executive Director, Biosecurity Services, Biosecurity and Agriculture Services, Agriculture Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 23 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5.

production and protects farming families against the actions of extreme animal rights activists.<sup>13</sup>

Timothy Kingma, pig farmer and VFF Pig Group President said:

In terms of the cost: obviously people showering, in and out, is half an hour of the day gone already at the start and at the end of the day; providing all the clothing; staff meetings; and then we have vets come on at least every three months. Part of those staff meetings is based around our biosecurity plans. We do internal audits of our biosecurity plans.<sup>14</sup>

Rivalea Australia said in their submission:

Conditions for entry to a particular Piggery Site vary, but will include procedures and requirements for:

- showering in;
- vehicle movements;
- use of company clothing and boots;
- time exclusion periods between Contact With Pigs and restrictions for staff on owning/raising pigs outside of Rivalea;
- time exclusion periods after returning from overseas, with extended exclusion periods after returning from destinations considered high risk (including for support staff that do not directly work within the Piggery Site);
- exclusion ban on pork products entering any Piggery Site (ham, bacon, salami, jerky etc), including within truck cabins;
- cleanliness of materials brought onto a piggery site – all materials must be clean and free from organic matter. Products manufactured in Asia must have a 10 week transit period prior to entering the farm boundary (including feed ingredients) to protect against the current ASF threat. Any materials moved between Rivalea farms are subject to veterinary/farm manager assessment and disinfection where required. Vendor declarations obtained where necessary;
- All visitors to a Piggery Site must be authorised prior to the visit and sign a visitor register at the time of the visit to declare that they meet our strict biosecurity protocols.
- All contractors are approved and inducted prior to work within our sites which includes clear directions on biosecurity requirements.<sup>15</sup>

**1.4.4 RECOMMENDATION 4:** That the Victorian Government review the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994* with a view to the creation of an offence for all visitors/trespassers non-compliance with a biosecurity management plan, including a requirement that all visitors/trespassers must comply with plans. In cases of trespass, it should clear that there is no requirement for business owners to have explained the biosecurity management plan to those trespassing

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<sup>13</sup> VFF Livestock Group, *submission 416*, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy Kingama, President, VFF Pig Group, public hearing, Wangaratta, 8 October 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Rivalea Australia, *submission 146A*, p. 1.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 4:** Support the Committee’s recommendation.

**Rationale**

The Committee heard evidence regarding the blatant disregard of activists towards biosecurity risk. It was clear from this evidence that obligations to comply, and penalties for failing to comply with biosecurity management plans should be strengthened.

One chicken farmer told the Committee:

They manage our farm under strict biosecurity with locks on all gates and appropriate legal signage. We have footbaths to sanitise all footwear. We have a visitors declaration for contact with any avian species or pigs before they are allowed to enter our farm and that is for disease control, particularly the H5N1 bird virus and 1LT, which is rife in the industry and easily spread on people’s bodies.

On approaching one of the protesters before the police asked us to return to the house, I asked them why they were there and what they hoped to achieve, and I said to the policeman who was beside me, ‘I hope you’re going to arrest these people’. And this gentleman said to me, ‘I’ve been arrested 17 times. I’ve never been charged’—and excuse my language—‘so go f--- yourself’.

And that was the attitude. We manage our farm under strict biosecurity. Our farm is biosecure, with locks on all gates and appropriate legal signage. We have footbaths to sanitise all footwear. We have a visitor’s declaration for contact with any avian species or pigs before they are allowed to enter our farm, and that is for disease control, particularly the H5N1 bird virus and ILT, which is rife in the industry and easily spread on people’s bodies. And anyone that has been in contact with any avian species, whether it be a pet budgie or a chicken that lays eggs in your backyard, is not allowed in our biosecurity area.

So to have 70 people in our sheds was an enormous risk to the biosecurity of our farm. We also have hand sanitiser at each entry point to the shed and—even my wife and myself—every time we enter the shed we wash our boots and we wash our hands in sanitiser. However, these people walked through mud to get into our sheds—through cow paddocks and sheep paddocks, through a back entry into our farm—and that, again, posed a risk to biosecurity.<sup>16</sup>

- 1.4.5 **RECOMMENDATION 5:** That the proposed new biosecurity offence include an on-the-spot fine, similar to the New South Wales model, for non-compliance with biosecurity management plans.

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<sup>16</sup> Name Withheld, public hearing, Warragul, 21 August 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 5:** Support the Committee’s recommendation.

**Rationale**

On the spot fines were endorsed by multiple industry bodies, including VFF Pig Group, Wannon Branch of United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, Australian Livestock and Property Agents and John Gommans of Gippy Goat and Caldermeade Farms.

John Gommans stated:

So, my recommendations to the Committee are that, because the courts appear reluctant to provide punishment, we should have on-the-spot substantive fines for trespass and breach of biosecurity. Activists are confident in their ability to ignore the police when it suits them. Drawing you to the New South Wales example, you can have an on-the-spot fine of \$1000, \$220 000 if you are an organiser, or \$440 000 if you are a corporation. A similar process in Victoria would be helpful.<sup>17</sup>

Mr Timothy Kingma, family pig farmer in north-central Victoria and VFF Pig Group President had this to say in relation to penalties:

I call for penalties of at least \$1000 on the spot and at least a \$220 000 fine for individuals and a \$400 000 fine for organisations. What is happening to farmers would not be acceptable in our local hospital, the school that my kids are at today or even this building. Would any of you accept this happening in your own home? I am a legally operating pig producer, and I just want the ability to grow food and contribute to the economy.<sup>18</sup>

- 1.4.6 **RECOMMENDATION 6:** That Agriculture Victoria display online information about animal agriculture standard practices and related legislation and regulations.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 6:** Support the Committee’s recommendation.

- 1.4.7 **RECOMMENDATION 7:** That Agriculture Victoria and PrimeSafe work with industry to collect examples of benchmark, high-quality animal welfare and biosecurity activities in animal agriculture to better inform the community of agricultural practices.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 7:** Support the Committee’s recommendation.

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<sup>17</sup> John Gommans, Gippy Goat Farm, public hearing, Warragul, 21 August 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p.31

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Kingma, President, VFF Pig Group, public hearing, Wangaratta, 8 October 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 8.

1.4.8 **RECOMMENDATION 8:** As a continuation of Recommendation 6, that Agriculture Victoria make information about the ‘compliance continuum’ more accessible on its website. This would help the public better understand the approach regulators take regarding breaches of animal welfare regulations and standards.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 8:** As a continuation of Recommendation 6, that Agriculture Victoria make information about the ‘compliance continuum’ more accessible on its website. ~~This would help the public better understand the approach regulators take regarding breaches of animal welfare regulations and standards.~~

#### **Rationale**

The Liberal and Nationals Members believe that Recommendation 8 will also benefit farmers, assisting them to understand the regulatory approach. The text of the recommendation is not the appropriate place to explain the Committee’s justification.

1.4.9 **RECOMMENDATION 9:** That the Victorian Government express its support to the Commonwealth Government for the creation of an Australian Commission for Animal Welfare, in order to expedite the process for the agreement of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 9:** That the Victorian Government encourage the Agriculture Minister’s Forum to expedite the process for the development of the Australian Animal Welfare Standard and Guidelines.

#### **Rationale**

It is the view of the Liberal and Nationals Members that the Agriculture Minister’s Forum is the appropriate forum for Victoria to encourage the expedition of the Australian Animal Welfare Standard and Guidelines, rather than an additional bureaucratic body.

The Committee did not hear any evidence that the problem with the development of the Australian Animal Welfare Guidelines was a lack of bureaucratic capability on the part of the Australian Government.

1.4.10 **RECOMMENDATION 10:** That the Victorian Government, in the absence of approved Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines incorporate existing animal welfare elements of industry quality assurance schemes into new codes of practice as part of its modernisation of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 10:** That the Victorian Government, in the absence of approved Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines and **with the support of the relevant industry peak body**, incorporate existing animal welfare elements of industry quality assurance schemes into new codes of practice as part of its modernisation of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

## Rationale

The Liberal and National Members of the Committee believe only when industry support is secured should codes be changed. We believe that quality assurance schemes play an important role in encouraging industry to lead by example in improving animal welfare outcomes. Blanket adoption of these standards by the Victorian Government may have perverse animal welfare outcomes by stifling industry innovation and leadership. For this reason we have recommended the Victorian Government ensure industry support for any aspect of the schemes that are adopted.

The Committee heard from the Timothy Kingma, the VFF Pig Group President how the pig industry has led the way in terms of phasing out sow stalls:

Our APIQ [Australian Pig Industry Quality] standard, which is our quality assurance program, is world leading. Other things we have done as an industry are that we were the first one in the world to voluntarily remove sow stalls. They were the things I was saying to him. I said, 'Mate, as an industry we're world leaders and we're doing things as well as anyone in the world, so be proud'.<sup>19</sup>

Sow stalls were a way to individually look after an animal. In Australia we have different consumer expectations so as an industry we chose to remove them and put them into group housing. Not necessarily is that better for the welfare of the animals, not 100 per cent, but there are techniques that we all use in our management practices that look after the animals in the group systems. That is why—it was a choice to make as an industry around consumers.<sup>20</sup>

1.4.11 **RECOMMENDATION 11:** That the Victorian Government consider its modernisation of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* to be a matter of priority.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 11:** Support the Committee's recommendation.

## Rationale

Liberal and Nationals Members support this recommendation but caution that prioritisation should not come at the expense of industry and community consultation. It is the understanding of the Liberal and Nationals Members that successive Victorian Labor Agriculture Ministers have been stalling the consultation process for the POCTA review.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

1.4.12 **RECOMMENDATION 12:** That the Victorian Government conduct an examination of alternative practices used around the world in the treatment of live male chicks in the egg industry and the use of blunt force trauma on goats, pigs, and cows with a view of adopting ‘world’s best’ practice. These standards should be higher than the existing codes of practice in the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 12:** Oppose the Committee’s recommendation.

#### **Rationale**

The Liberal and Nationals Members believe that the Committee, including Government Members, have acted inappropriately in pushing through this recommendation without providing industry stakeholders the opportunity to comment on these matters when they appeared before the Committee.

Committee Members at no time asked questions during hearings of the following industry organisations or individuals regarding the content of Recommendation 12:

- **Free Range Egg and Poultry Australian Treasurer, free range egg producer**, Meg Parkinson
- **LT's Egg Farm**, Danyel Cucinotta, Brian Ahmed
- **Agriculture Victoria**, Sally Fensling, Executive Director, Animal Welfare Victoria, and Agriculture Regulatory Policy, Michael Rosier, Acting Executive Director, Biosecurity Services, Biosecurity and Agriculture Services, Dr Cameron Bell, Acting Chief Veterinary Officer, Biosecurity and Agriculture Services.
- **Professor Paul Hemsworth**, Animal Welfare Science Centre, Melbourne University.
- **Victorian Farmers Federation**, David Jochinke, President, Stephen Sheridan CEO.
- **United Dairyfarmers of Victoria**, Paul Mumford, President.
- **Victorian Farmers Federation**, Leonard Vallance, President, Livestock Council.
- **Australian Livestock Saleyard Association**, Mark McDonald, Executive Officer, Paul Christopher, Horsham Saleyard Manager, Richard James, Naracoorte Saleyard Manager, Sally Ison.
- **Luv-a-Duck**, Daryl Bussell, CEO, John Millington.
- **United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, Wannon Branch**, Chris O’Keefe, Secretary, Bernie Free, Member, Oonagh Kilpatrick, Policy Councillor.
- **RSPCA Victoria**, Mhairi Roberts, Animal Welfare Policy Manager, Jed Goodfellow, Science and Policy Team Lead.
- **Australian Meat Industry Council**, Patrick Hutchinson, CEO.
- **Gippy Goat Farm**, John Gommans.

1.4.13 **RECOMMENDATION 13:** That any new codes of practice in the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* include appropriate penalties for non-compliance.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 13:** Support the Committee’s recommendation.

1.4.14 **RECOMMENDATION 14:** That following consultation with industry, unions and other relevant stakeholders, the Victorian Government consider the implementation of closed-circuit television cameras in Victorian abattoirs with a legislative model similar to the *Mandatory Use of Closed Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018*.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 14:** That following consultation with industry, unions and other relevant stakeholders, the Victorian Government provide monetary assistance for voluntary adoption of closed-circuit television cameras in Victorian abattoirs.

### **Rationale**

The Liberal and Nationals Members acknowledge the conflicting evidence on the use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) monitoring in agricultural settings. The Committee recommendation to mandate CCTV (modelled on *Mandatory Use of Closed-Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018*) was not supported in the evidence provided to the Committee.

In relation to CCTV in abattoirs one industry representative stated:

Look, it is not compulsory, but I think it is a chance that it will be. Obviously, we are audited by our customers, we are audited by our authorities and at this stage it is not legal, so we have not. We are looking at putting cameras in for that reason, to monitor our staff, but we are very, very cautious. I know the meat union are very cautious about, obviously, surveillance, their privacy—

I do not think the union would be in favour of that. There is a certain privacy. But look, there are areas where cameras are valuable as far workplace accidents go—areas where there is non-compliance should definitely have cameras—but that is something that we would have to discuss with the union. But I know that they are not that keen on cameras being on plant. To what level they accept certain cameras in certain areas is something we have not discussed with them yet. Most of our cameras are external, they are not internal. I think we have got one internal camera, but most of them are external on the surrounds of the plant.<sup>21</sup>

North East Victorian, Mr Bill Baxter raised his concerns in relation to who would interpret the footage:

I do not actually object to television cameras being there [in abattoirs], but who is interpreting what the television is recording? Are they putting a fair interpretation on it? I do not know that there is a case to put it in every abattoir, but I think it is something that the Committee will need to weigh up, looking at the evidence and taking evidence from abattoir owners.<sup>22</sup>

The VFF held strong sentiment against the installation of CCTV within agricultural businesses. VFF President David Jochinke said:

First of all, and this is the part that really grinds my gears, there is an assertion that we are criminals and we are doing something wrong. That is absolutely absurd. I am absolutely flabbergasted that somebody of that profession and ilk would take the attitude that you are

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<sup>21</sup> Name Withheld, public hearing, Warragul, 21 August 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Bill Baxter, public hearing, Wangaratta, 8 October 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 16.

guilty until proven innocent and the fact of the impracticality of such a suggestion that it would be a solution. I really struggle that that should be a solution. However, I will also say that we have to make sure that as far as the agriculture community goes, we are open to having conversations, that we are open to giving assurances. But to treat us in such a manner is not only disrespectful in its absurdity, but then also for me as a citizen I would find that a complete disrespect to not only my trade but to my profession and even my community.<sup>23</sup>

1.4.15 **RECOMMEDATION 15:** That Agriculture Victoria conduct an audit of its responses to substantiated animal welfare complaints in 2019 to determine if the appropriate action was taken in each case. The results of the audit should be published on Agriculture Victoria’s website. The results should be deidentified to ensure no breach of privacy occurs.

**MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 15:**

a) That Agriculture Victoria conduct an audit of its responses to substantiated animal welfare complaints in 2019 to determine if the appropriate action was taken in each case. The results of the audit should be published on Agriculture Victoria’s website. The results should be deidentified to ensure no breach of privacy occurs.

**b) That the appropriate authority(ies) conduct an audit(audits) of the responses of police and the judiciary to instances of trespass and theft by animal activists.**

**Rationale**

Given the concern heard by the Committee regarding the response of Police and the judiciary to animal activist activity, Liberal and Nationals Members believe it appropriate that these responses also be audited to determine if appropriate action was taken in each case.

1.4.16 **MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 16:** That the Victorian Government requests the Judicial College of Victoria to provide education and training to magistrates and judges about consequences and impacts of farm trespass and animal activism, particularly those undertaking circuit work in regional courts.

**Rationale**

The Committee heard evidence from numerous stakeholders who were dismayed by the financial penalties handed down to the animal activists convicted after removing and keeping a goat from John Gommans’ Gippy Goat Farm.

A number of submission and witnesses voiced their dismay and requested greater understanding of the plight of farmers on the part of the Judiciary:

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<sup>23</sup> David Jochinke, President, Victorian Farmers Federation, public hearing, Melbourne, 23 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 47.

The Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association:

ALPA recommends the Victorian government provide educational resources to prosecutors and judges that highlights the value of agricultural industries and the severity of biosecurity breaches. The \$1 Gippy Goat fine was a mockery of the value of the industry and the possible biosecurity implications.<sup>24</sup>

Mr Bill Baxter:

If the magistracy is not prepared to apply the law as Parliament surely intended, then Parliament needs to act.<sup>25</sup>

Mrs Kaye and Mr Graham Laing:

It was an extreme insult when the activists were brought to court and fined \$1. What message does that send to our farming families, are we that undervalued.<sup>26</sup>

1.4.17 **MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 17:** That the Victorian Government investigate statutory minimum penalties for trespass and theft with a view to implementing statutory minimum penalties when a threshold of physical or financial damage has been inflicted.

#### **Rationale**

The Victorian Farmers Federation said in their submission:

Despite the State of Victoria having existing trespass legislation, it is not accommodating the current issues occurring on farms, and the criminal code cannot be retrofitted to these circumstances within the judiciary system. Evidence of misapplication has been identified with fines being issued to persons who have engaged in trespass receiving a fine of \$1. This demonstrates the requirement for the State of Victoria to urgently establish laws that protect farmers' livelihoods.<sup>27</sup>

Australian Dairy Farmers said:

The Victorian Government should adopt Western Australia's trespass law with a slight amendment of making some or all of the \$12,000 fine issued as on the spot. This locks in a minimum penalty to protect against the imposition of grossly inadequate sentences being handed down by the courts.<sup>28</sup>

The Victorian Government should consider including a provision in the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 (Vic) that enables farm trespassers to be prosecuted for causing an animal disease and for fines to include cost recovery for negatively impacted parties.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association, *submission 390*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Bill Baxter, *submission 22*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Kaye & Graham Laing, *submission 33*, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Victorian Farmers Federation, *submission 391*, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

The Diamond Valley Egg Farm submission called for:

- The ability for affected businesses to recoup the financial and future earning losses from Animal Rights Activist groups and individuals.
- Jail terms which deter the crime not opportunities to gain exposure for the activists.<sup>30</sup>

Ms Danyel Cucinotta, Egg Farmer, LT's Egg Farm stated:

The Victorian Government needs to introduce new strict and harsh penalties for those who invade and cause destruction to our Aussie farms. They need to ensure that those individuals are penalised and large organisations who promote this behaviour are also penalised appropriately.

I would also recommend that the large organisations are not able to pay the fines on behalf of these individuals committing these crimes and that each one should get a criminal offence. These laws need to be stricter and properly enforced, and the next generation of farmers needs to be protected—otherwise they will stop farming. Is this what we want? Do we want to import our food from overseas and from countries where they have no quality assurance standards and processes?<sup>31</sup>

Victorian Farmers Federation Livestock Group said in its submission:

Laws are developed to protect people and communities and currently the Victorian farming community does not feel protected against farm invasions and the threat of farm invasions. Farmers should be able to go about their legal business of producing quality food and fibre for consumers without the threat of animal activists. This begins with tougher penalties for extreme actions of activists including trespassing, livestock theft and vandalism. These are well-planned and deliberate acts of criminal behaviour and should be treated as such regardless of intent.<sup>32</sup>

Victorian free-range egg farmer, Meg Parkinson said:

The UK shows why it is important that strong penalties be implemented against animal rights activists. There are animal rights organisations in the UK which use terrible levels of intimidation against any organisations or people they do not like.<sup>33</sup>

**1.4.18 MINORITY RECOMMENDATION 18:** That the Victorian Government legislates to re-affirm the right of farmers to use animals in agriculture.

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<sup>30</sup> Diamond Valley Egg Farm, *submission 228*, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Danyel Cucinotta, Egg Farmer, LT's Egg Farm, public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Victorian Farmers Federation Livestock Group, *submission 416*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Meg Parkinson, *submission 374*, p. 3.

## **Rationale**

The Liberal and Nationals Members are appalled that the Government Members of the Committee voted against this motion (as evidenced in the Extract of Proceedings), failing to support Victorian livestock farmers' right to farm. Livestock production is an integral contributor to Victoria's economy and the identity of many of our regional communities are intrinsically linked to livestock farming. Victoria's Parliament must act to safeguard Victoria's strong tradition of livestock farming against the illegal activities of animal activists that seek to destroy the industry.

## **1.5 Discussion**

### **1.5.1 Mental Health**

The Committee heard extensive evidence regarding the detrimental impact animal activist activity can have on the mental health of farmers, their families and their staff. Liberal and Nationals Members want to ensure that this evidence is heard. It is appropriate that the voices of these people are heard. Unfortunately, Government Members voted against the inclusion of many of these case studies in the Committee Report.

The Committee heard from a Mornington Peninsula chicken farmer about the impact of an incidence of illegal trespass on himself and his family:

Lack of sleep, the fear, the anxiety, the depression and the constant surveillance just took its toll on us, and we decided that we just had to sell up and get the hell out—so we did.

So, these people invaded our home, and when I got dressed and walked down with the police I was absolutely confronted. I was fearful.

These people had dark clothes. They had hoodies on. They did not want to be easily recognised. I did not know who they were. To all intents and purposes, they were terrorists. They presented like terrorists. They could have had baseball bats, they could have had knives, they could have had guns. I do not know. All I know is that there were 70 people in one of our sheds, which is a horrifying thing to confront. In their manner they are confrontational, they are abusive, and they wanted us to engage them to cause a scene, which we did not. So, we were frightened. The image was one of terrorism, and we were very fearful for our safety. They called us killers, they called us animal abusers and they called us criminals. They said that they would return, and they did, one week later. That is when they spray-painted the side of one of our sheds with the graffiti.<sup>34</sup>

The Committee learnt that the mental health of employers and their workers can be compromised when their businesses are targeted by protestors:

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<sup>34</sup> Name Withheld, public hearing, Warragul, 21 August 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3.

I think the most disturbing thing is the mental state of the people that witnessed it and they have this ongoing fear that it is going to come back again.<sup>35</sup>

My staff are Karen refugees. The four people that were involved with the contract catch up crew are Karen refugees. We had the onerous task to sit down with them and show the video footage taken by these activists about their work practices, and they were deeply affected by that—deeply and mentally affected.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.5.2 Financial Losses for Businesses

Government Members voted against the inclusion of evidence of the financial cost to farmers of trespass and activism. This evidence has been included to ensure the voice of impacted farmers is appropriately recognised.

Mr John Gommans of Gippy Goat Café gave evidence that through harassment of his staff and social media targeting of his customers he was forced to close the Gippy Goat Café which had a turnover of \$800,000.<sup>37</sup>

Mr Brian Ahmed, egg farmer, LT's Egg Farm, speaking of the impact of one instance of activist activity on his farm:

The economic cost—on our occasion we suffered probably close to \$10 000 in damages. That was to the doors that were broken into, disruption to our grading facilities and things like that.<sup>38</sup>

Mr Ahmed received no compensation from activists – a \$750 fine was ordered to be paid by the perpetrators to an animal welfare organisation of their choice.

We went to court, and they were given a \$750 fine which then went to a third party, the RSPCA, and they had no criminal record.<sup>39</sup>

A Mornington Peninsula chicken farmer noted the loss of 300 birds, a ruptured watering system, cleaning of graffiti and loss of production as costs to be borne as a direct result of activism on his farm.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Gary Bussell, CEO, Luv A Duck, public hearing, Horsham, 18 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> John Millington, Contractor, Luv A Duck, public hearing, Horsham, 18 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> John Gommans, Gippy Goat Farm, public hearing, Warragul, 21 August 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p.34.

<sup>38</sup> Brian Ahmed, Egg Farmer, LT's Egg Farm, public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Name Withheld, public hearing, Warragul, 21 August 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 8.

A submission from Diamond Valley Egg Farm identified the business had 'experienced firsthand the damage Animal Rights Activists cause a business and the agriculture industry', including:<sup>41</sup>

- Enclosure of the property with a 1.8 metre chain mesh fence topped with three strands of barbed wire;
- Updated and increased security monitoring systems to record movement on the farm;
- Additional security locks on perimeter fencing and buildings;
- Culling of 280,000 laying hens as a biosecurity precaution and subsequent;
- Loss of opportunities in export markets;
- Loss of the revenue for the next 12 - 15 months before the business can resume full trading; and
- Expensive clean-up costs running into millions of dollars.<sup>42</sup>

### 1.5.3 Economic value of Victorian agriculture

The Liberal and Nationals Members are disappointed that the Committee Report does not adequately acknowledge the economic contribution of Victorian agricultural industries, including animal agriculture. The Report gives considerable weight in Chapter 5 to the motivations of animal activists but does not appropriately evidence the importance of our livestock industries, particularly to regional Victoria. This section includes *some* of the considerable evidence submitted to and heard by the Committee.

Anonymous witness:

Just a bit of brief background on our company, is based here in Warragul and was established in 1946 by my father. We currently employ 150 staff and have a strong membership in the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union.<sup>43</sup>

Patrick Hutchinson, CEO of the Australian Meat Industry Council:

We employ almost 50 000 rural and regional people as full-time equivalents in our industry across Australia every year. We probably employ, through multiplier effects, another 125,000 — notwithstanding then, basically the bulk of farmers that obviously rely on us.<sup>44</sup>

Our industry is a \$25 billion industry within Australia. It is now basically a \$15 billion export industry. It is the largest agricultural export industry; it is the seventh largest export industry in total. So there are five minerals, tourism, education and then red meat, so you can effectively look at it from a very basic level, and that is in our state of the industry reports that come out annually.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Diamond Valley Egg Farm, *Submission 228*, p. 1

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Name Withheld, public hearing, Warragul, 21 August 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup> Patrick Hutchinson, CEO, Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC), public hearing, Warragul, 21 September 2019, p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

Patrick Hutchinson in reference to the Animal Justice Party:

Their requirements are quite clear—that is, an end to animal farming. So if it was all wiped off the face of the country so to speak, then we know that is probably more three times the amount of \$25 billion in the loss of wages, loss of jobs, et cetera, et cetera.<sup>46</sup>

Cr Daniel Meade, Moyne Shire:

Agriculture is vital to our country's food production—a huge role in the economy and a major employer for the Moyne shire. The annual output from the agricultural sector in Moyne shire alone is \$618 million, and the sector supports nearly 3500 full-time jobs. Threats to the sustainability and security of this sector cannot be tolerated, and voluntary acts that create such threats should be penalised strongly by law.<sup>47</sup>

Simon Ramsay said:

I am a part owner and director of a food company that processes lamb for Coles supermarkets, employs 400 people and generates about \$30 million for the local economy here in western Victoria.<sup>48</sup>

I have worked both in and on the growth and protection of the animal, plant and fibre industries over my lifetime and am extremely concerned that an industry that produces over \$8 billion of product, employs over 90 000 workers, sustains over 30 000 fragile farming families and provides a GNP to Victoria of over \$14 billion would be put at risk by small group of vegans that represent less than 1 per cent of our food-eating population pursuing a philosophical ideal of ridding Australia of animal production and replacing it with plant production.<sup>49</sup>

Bernie Free, Member of the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria, Wannon Branch:

Where a farmer has strict protocols protesters can cause the very thing that they say they want to prevent. This is not to mention the possible introduction by an overseas traveller of mad cow disease or foot-and-mouth disease, which would wipe out a \$14 billion agricultural industry from Victoria.<sup>50</sup>

Oonagh Kilpatrick, Policy Councillor, United Dairy Farmers of Victoria, Wannon Branch:

Yes, the impact on the dairy industry is colossal. In this region, I think for every \$1 million that we generate we create something like four and a half or five jobs—five positions, full-time positions. Irrespective of where it is, we are the third largest rural industry in Australia—here we are number one—and we are looking at 4.27 billion, creating for every million dollars spent throughout the whole of Australia eight and a half full-time jobs.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Cr Daniel Meade, Deputy Mayor, Moyne Shire Council, public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 40.

<sup>48</sup> Simon Ramsay, public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Bernie Free, Member, United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (Wannon Branch), public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Oonagh Kilpatrick, Policy Councillor, United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (Wannon Branch), public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 31.

Katherine Cain:

Apart from the direct threat that activists pose to the welfare of livestock, themselves and other people, the indirect impact they pose is a threat to not only animal and personal welfare but to our state's economy. To quote the Agriculture Victoria Strategy: "Victoria is the powerhouse of Australian food and fibre exports." Our state is the biggest exporter by value nationally, and with over half the gross value of Victoria's agricultural industry derived from livestock and a projected stratospheric increase in demand for Victoria's animal-derived proteins, the future is exciting.<sup>52</sup>

Anthony Ford, Executive Officer, Great South Coast Food and Fibre Council:

I just want to take 2 minutes just to explain, from an animal perspective, the value of the industry to our region. Food and fibre produces over 60 per cent of the regional domestic product for the region, and we produce over \$2 billion worth of animal-based farm gate outputs. To put that into perspective, Australia's export is forecast to be \$59 billion this year. We produce \$2 billion of that at a farm gate level here. On top of that \$2 billion there is forestry, cropping and horticulture as well. That takes it up to the number one region in Victoria for output of agriculture and food products.<sup>53</sup>

Lisa Dwyer:

The Great South Coast region is characterised by a high concentration of agricultural activity... It comprises 29 per cent of our gross regional product, and from a dairy-specific perspective a recent study demonstrated a multiplier effect totalling \$1.364 billion that is reinjected into this community and that also supports 8600 jobs either on farm or in the processing sector. The dairy sector in the south-west is now the nation's largest, and it is therefore strategically important to Victoria's economy.<sup>54</sup>

One of the things that I have noticed is that every discussion on this topic, and mine is no exception, seems to reference the economic imperatives of agriculture. I am the last person to say that we should underestimate that. But I think that the importance of what we as farmers and others involved in livestock production provide extends far beyond just the economic imperatives because it also encompasses social wellbeing and the wellbeing of our nation... From a historical perspective, it is also worth noting that the co-evolution of humans and animals extends beyond 10 000 years, and as a result the co-dependencies between animals and humans have shaped cultures across the world and also help us to understand who we are...we should instead be proud of our roles in producing high-quality food and fibre for millions of people in a manner that is both sustainable and ethical, and we should be equally proud of the communities that we are a part of and the contribution that we make to our state and our nation. The final point that I would like to raise is that expanding the value of the role that agriculture plays beyond economics and social wellbeing is the often overlooked value that Victorian agricultural production plays in the national wellbeing. Victoria contributes 27 per cent of Australia's total food and fibre by export value and as a result is well positioned to play a role in supporting international diplomacy efforts via the food security priorities of other nations that are not only in our domestic interests but also in the interests of the people of those countries with which we trade.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Katherine Cain, public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Anthony Ford, Executive Officer, Great South Coast Food and Fibre Council, public hearing, Warrnambool, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Lisa Dwyer, public hearing, Warrnambool, 17 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

Paul Mumford, President, United Dairyfarmers of Victoria:

Dairy farmers are also integral for the economic respect for local communities. As this is an economic inquiry, I will touch briefly on what dairy contributes to the Victorian dairy economy. The Australian dairy industry is currently valued at \$14 billion, with 65 per cent of this value coming from Victoria. That equates to around \$9.1 billion. Dairy is also a major employer in regional communities, both on farm and in the processing facilities, employing over 25 000 people who help economic growth and stimulus for regional and rural communities.<sup>56</sup>

Michael Rosier, Acting Executive Director, Biosecurity Services, Biosecurity and Agriculture Services, Agriculture Victoria:

Despite having a relatively small percentage of agricultural land and development relative to some other parts of Australia, Victoria is actually a very significant producer of agricultural products. We are talking about around 21 000 farms, 70 per cent of which are livestock-based, and that is significant. In terms of productivity, the 2017-18 financial year statistics for Australia's total gross value of agricultural production had Victoria contributing over 25 per cent of the nation's total, at a value of around \$15 billion relative to the national total of \$59 billion—so very significant. The industry in Victoria is also relevant and important in terms of regional and rural communities and employment, with around 52 000 people employed in the sector—so very significant in terms of the state and the national economy.<sup>57</sup>



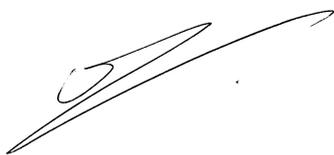
**Melina Bath MP**

Member for Eastern Victoria Region



**Beverley McArthur MP**

Member for Western Victoria Region



**Bernie Finn MP**

Member for Western Metropolitan Region

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<sup>56</sup> Paul Mumford, President, United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 23 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 40.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Rosier, Acting Executive Director, Biosecurity Services, Biosecurity and Agriculture Services, Agriculture Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 23 September 2019, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1.

December 18, 2019