

Legislation Committee

From:
Sent: Tuesday, 17 April 2018 11:03 AM
To: Legislation Committee
Subject: WA ANIMAL WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL 2017- SUBMISSIONS TO COMMITTEE

Mr Mark Warner
 Committee Clerk
 Standing Committee on Legislation
 Parliament House, 4 Harvest Terrace
 West Perth WA 6005

Dear Sir,

I take the opportunity to comment on the proposed Bill and note that the amendments will dramatically improve the lives of animals and introduce desperately needed transparency and accountability in the animal businesses.

This Bill is a big step to improve the legal protections for our stock or companion animals.

Standards and Guidelines:

Currently, the Industry follows livestock transport Codes of Practice. However, the current Animal Welfare Act is very limited in its capacity to regulate matters relating to the health, safety and welfare of animals. Moreover, codes are voluntary and it is very difficult to use them to prosecute for cruelty, whereas the Standards and Guidelines can be used to prosecute for breaches.

By 2012 all Australian States **except Western Australia** had adopted the Standards and Guidelines into legislation. This is significant because Western Australia exports most live sheep. All the more important to put in place Standards and Guidelines to regulate their health, welfare and safety. The Amendment Bill will allow the adoption of the Land Transport Standards and Guidelines into law including the more recent Sheep Standards, Cattle Standards and Saleyard Standards. The Amendments to the act are a tangible step towards improving the welfare of livestock in this State, and furthermore it

- * Will ensure industry and the community have clear guidance on minimum standards to be met and will help to strengthen public confidence in the livestock sector.
- * Will restore community confidence that their expectations of welfare standards are met. (As we have seen time and again, the industry's words of assurance that cruelty is not taking place, cannot be taken seriously.)

Inspections for Compliance:

Unlike Europe, the current WA Animal Welfare legislation does not permit routine, unannounced inspections to ensure compliance at a private business; be that a cat or dog breeding farm, pet bird breeding premise, sheep, cattle, rabbit, pig, poultry farm, feedlot, slaughterhouse, live animal export premise or live animal export vessel. Currently an Inspector cannot simply enter an animal business premise because the public wants them to. An Inspector may only gain access if they receive a complaint and as a result they believe cruelty may have been or is occurring. This means the offending business will be notified of the inspection and has time to dispose of and hide all traces of cruelty. This Bill in simple terms has the capacity to help millions of WA animals and make the farming/transporting industry more accountable.

The Amendment will allow inspectors to randomly (without notice) and routinely check to ensure that animal welfare legislation is being followed. This is especially significant at this time given the revelations concerning shocking images of suffering sheep and of pregnant ewes giving birth on live export vessels to the Middle East.

The community demands transparent and accountable animal businesses. The public wants to know that breeder of companion animals and animals produced for the wool, meat or milk they buy, have had basic legislative protection. It is imperative that WA has strong, enforceable legislation as well as routine checks for compliance.

It is simply not acceptable that Industry objects to unannounced visits on the grounds of "an invasion of privacy and too much regulatory power". How can privacy considerations be more important than exposing animal suffering? Any animal business which has nothing to hide will not object to random inspections, and all must be fully accountable to consumers. This will only happen with increased powers for inspectors.

There is overwhelming community support of the amendments because there is immense concern by Western Australians for animals' wellbeing, particularly now that inhumane practices in live export are in the spotlight

I urge this committee to recommend that the Bill is passed in the Upper House to satisfy community expectation and trust in the pet and agricultural Industry.

Thank you

Verena Homberger

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