



Criminal Code Amendment (Agricultural Protection) Bill 2019

Submission by the Animals Protectors Alliance

The federal government has introduced this Bill for apparently no purpose other than to criminalise the compassionate rescue of suffering animals from acts of unconscionable cruelty, and the publication of evidence of such cruelty.

The bill would criminalise the compassion-motivated rescue of animals from acts of cruelty which are currently either:

- permitted under industry codes of practice - which even the Productivity Commission has ruled incapable of preventing cruelty (*Regulation of Australian Agriculture Productivity Commission, Inquiry Report No. 79, 15 November 2016 p20*); or
- prohibited under existing regulations (ie Acts of Parliament, state government regulation, or code of practice) but offences against these instruments are routinely ignored by state and federal police, government inspectors or other law enforcement agencies.

The bill would also criminalise the publication of evidence of such cruelty. Certainly, there is some protection in the Bill for publication in the public interest. And certainly there can be no doubt any animal lover who ever “trespasses” on the land of an animal producer, and/or rescues an animal perceived to be “owned” by the owner of that land, always does so wholly in the public interest.

However, the Bill places the onus of proving public interest on the rescuer or the gatherer of evidence, and limits the right of publication to a ‘professional’ journalist (whatever that means). Obviously, both the meat industry and the public prosecutor have access to far better financial resources than the average individual who rescues animals. If enacted, this bill has the potential to do terrible injustice to courageous, compassionate people whom the public should (and mostly do) applaud as the heroes of humanity’s last great emancipation movement.

The mind-boggling irony of this bill is that it is being introduced at a time in history when any government that actually cares about the welfare of its agricultural producers, or its over-all economy (let alone the general public and the nation’s animals), should be doing everything within its power to shut down all animal production on all its agricultural land – and not just because it is cruel to animals (which it almost always is).

Animal production (both intensive and extensive) needs to be ended as soon as possible because it:

- is responsible for up to a third of Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions;
- occupies land that could be restored as greenhouse gas sinks;



- occupies land that could be restored as wildlife habitat;
- occupies land that could be used to grow plant products which are orders of magnitude less damaging to the planet than animal products;
- occupies land that could be used to grow plant products which are orders of magnitude more efficient sources of food and fibre than animal products; and
- occupies land, which even if too degraded by generations of animal production to be used to grow anything else, could still be used for solar and wind farms.

It is clear that, globally, all animal agriculture will be forced to end in the very near future. A responsible government should be encouraging and assisting livestock farmers to transition to alternative forms of agriculture before the global catastrophe (to which they are such major contributors) forces it on them while they are still obdurate, unprepared and uncompensated. To this end, the Government should be assisting the members of the public who expose the cruelty of animal agriculture to do so, not criminalising that exposure.

In many ways, of course, this bill is a milestone in the growth of Australia's animal justice movement. In the words of Mohandas Gandhi: *First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.*

Hopefully Stage 3 won't last too long, and not too many compassionate humans and innocent animals will have to suffer before it ends.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this appalling bill.

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For the Animal Protectors Alliance