

The proposed Criminal Code Amendment (Animal Protection) Bill 2015 seeks to prevent animal advocates and welfare groups from documenting inhumane practices in animal industries.

This attempt to silence investigations into animal abuse is misguided. If this Bill had existed, the recent revelations of cruelty within the greyhound racing industry would most likely have been a criminal act. As it is, the community is outraged at the hideous cruelty revealed by the investigations, and rightly so. Animal abuse is a crime and the perpetrators are the ones who should be punished, not those who reveal their inhumane practices.

Gathering evidence of animal abuse often requires long-term investigations. Requiring undercover investigators to hand over footages or photos within one business day completely undermines their ability to gather the necessary information to build a case. Existing laws are already sufficient to deal with undercover surveillance events.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the public requires, indeed demands, transparency, accountability and sound, humane management in the important matter of animal welfare. The Government has a responsibility to ensure that their expectations are met to the highest degree in this regard. This does not entail criminalising those who reveal the abhorrent cruelty which, without doubt, exists in some quarters.

Beryl Dix