

28 August 2019



Australian Pork Limited
ABN 83 092 783 278

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

**Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the
Criminal Code Amendment (Agricultural Protection) Bill 2019 (“Inquiry”)
– Responses to adverse reflections and false statements**

In reference to your email of 14 August 2019, Australian Pork Limited (“APL”) seeks to provide the committee with a response to adverse reflections and false and misleading statements that were made against its members by other witnesses at the Inquiry.

Mr Christopher Delforce from Aussie Farms Inc made four statements that APL believes are adverse reflections on APL and its members. The statements, and APL’s responses are detailed below.

1. *“I’m talking about gas chambers in all major pig slaughterhouses, which the industry has been calling humane for over 25 years while our footage has shown that every pig who enters that chamber and is lowered into that gas, screams and thrashes in desperate agony.”*
(Transcript - page 30)

CO₂ stunning is used widely as a humane technique to ensure pigs are not conscious at the point of slaughter. It is used in Australia and internationally for pigs and poultry. Within Australia and internationally, CO₂ stunning is considered a superior method to stun pigs due to its ability to provide consistent insensibility with minimal handling – a proven distress factor for pigs.

The use of the expression “gas chamber” is deliberately provocative and designed to evoke notions of toxic chemicals. CO₂ is a naturally occurring substance in the atmosphere, and is created through respiratory systems of humans, pigs and other organisms. It is also sequestered by plant material to produce vegetation.

The use of CO₂ within stunning gondolas is to displace oxygen, thus making pigs unconscious within a matter of seconds. It is the best available stunning method compared to alternatives. The adverse reactions of some pigs exposed to CO₂ can be exacerbated by a number of factors such as the handling of pigs prior to stunning and the genotype of the animal. Footage which shows pigs reacting “in desperate agony” are not necessarily doing so due to the effects of CO₂.

Footage published by APL on the website www.aussiepigfarmers.com.au shows how technological innovations such as automated gates can minimise stockperson contact and reduce stress at the point of stunning.¹

2. *“Every single animal who is in those farms is going to die a horrific, brutal death.”*
(Transcript - page 32)

The death of any animal is not a pleasant sight or experience. However, abattoirs are independently audited to ensure that livestock are treated humanely from arrival into lairage right up to the point of slaughter. APL strongly supports regulatory action taken against farms or facilities found to have poor welfare outcomes.

APL and its members are firmly of the belief that pigs which are slaughtered in order to provide food and nutrition for humans must be treated humanely throughout their life, including at the point of slaughter. The use of CO₂ stunning ensures that pigs are not sensible when they are slaughtered, which is an essential requirement of humane slaughter.

3. *“We're seeing pressure from the community based on this footage that is leading to things like the pork industry planning to phase out sow stalls.”*
(Transcript - page 33)

The pork industry started discussions about phasing out sow stalls in 2010, with the decision made in 2011 to voluntarily phase out sow stalls, independent of any activist pressure. This can be easily substantiated in that the first illegal footage of a piggery to emerge on the Aussie Farms website was in 2012, which was after APL's decision to phase out sow stalls and two years after the consultations began. Industry made a conscious choice to proactively phase out stalls, following many years of research investment on how to manage sow welfare in groups. Prior to this, a main function of sow stalls was to prevent fighting between sows and the associated stress and injury to the sow.

4. **“Senator CHANDLER:** *You speak about your personal point of view and you're obviously very passionate about this issue, but do you agree that there are passionate farmers out there who want to provide a required service to the Australian people? As we have said, there are many people who like to consume meat, and they should be allowed to do that. Do you not accept that your right to be able to uncover this sort of action, whether it's lawful or unlawful, needs to be balanced out with the right of business owners to conduct their business safely?*

Mr Delforce: *Activists pose no safety risk to farmers. We are nonviolent. We will never—*

Senator CHANDLER: *The submissions that we heard this morning would contradict that statement.*

Mr Delforce: *I will have to look at those. But, in my knowledge, there has not been a single incident of an activist attacking a farmer while on their property or going anywhere near their homes or families in 45 years.”*

(Transcript - page 33)

The website promoted by Aussie Farms Inc, www.aussiefarms.org.au has a number of photographs of farmers' homes. Indeed, of the photos that Aussie Farms began capturing

¹ <https://aussiepigfarmers.com.au/pork/our-processing/>

in 2010-11, almost half are photographs of houses. These are still listed on the Aussie Farms website and listed as 'Poultry Farms'. One of the consequences of inadequate penalties for activist trespass has been that the majority of photographs since 2012 have been inside facilities, and proportionally less photographs of family homes.

However, close-up photographs of farm houses, accompanied by addresses, are still common, the latest was taken as recently as 30 July 2018. In this photograph, taken from the front gate of a house in Dublin, South Australia, a children's swing set can be observed in the frame. It is incorrect and disingenuous for activists to suggest that they do not intend to intimidate and threaten farmers and their families when these images are prevalent on a major website influencing the activism movement.

Anecdotally, APL has been advised by one producer that activists that invaded a piggery in 2018 accessed a garden tap attached to the farm manager's house, having failed to bring sufficient water with them. This shows how unprepared activist groups are and shows the disregard for the environment in which they might find themselves on farming properties, putting themselves and others at risk.

General comments

The Australian pork industry implements changes to animal welfare policy when informed by science that this is the right thing to do for the pig. This approach necessarily ignores anthropomorphic emotion about the perceptions of the right thing to do for animal welfare espoused by many animal activists. Significant funding is contributed by the pork industry towards research that improves welfare on farm, in transport and at slaughter.

The Animal Welfare Science Centre at the University of Melbourne has recently published a review of scientific literature and international pig welfare codes and standards to underpin the future Standards and Guidelines for welfare and management in the Australian pork industry.² This review provides conclusions, recommendations and future research for numerous welfare issues relevant to the Australian pork industry. This review confirms APL's view that it essential for welfare policy to be directed by scientific literature, and not emotion, as to do otherwise leads to a chaotic and political approach to policy and a poor outcome for all stakeholders. APL strongly believes that discussions ought to be well informed and reasonable taking into account animal welfare, food production, regional economies and employment.

If you require further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact APL's General Manager of Policy, Deb Kerr or

Yours faithfully

Deb Kerr
General Manager Policy

² <http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/pigs/>

Attachment I – Photographs of homes on Aussie Farms Website



Captured May 2018 and uploaded to Aussie Farms website anonymously on 30 July 2018
<https://www.aussiefarms.org.au/photos?id=da3ef2056572cf5d10cd>



Captured 2010 and uploaded to Aussie Farms website anonymously on 4 August 2018
<https://www.aussiefarms.org.au/photos?id=6c889c01946e2020e8a3>