

CHAPTER 4

PEAK NATIONAL BODIES

4.1 There are a great range of issues and opinions concerning animal welfare in intensive livestock production. The peak national bodies most concerned and involved have played a key role in this inquiry. Their submissions and oral evidence have provided a proper context in which to consider intensive animal husbandry and its relationship to the welfare of animals. Each one has contributed a wealth of experience, expertise and philosophical standpoints.

4.2 While these are discussed throughout the report in the context of particular issues the following summary provides a general introduction to these bodies and their perspectives on this important debate.

4.3 National bodies and key contributions to this inquiry have been the:

- Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies
- Australian Council of Egg Producers
- Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals
- Australian Pig Industry Policy Council
- Australian Poultry Industries Association
- Australian Veterinary Association
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Australia).

Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies

4.4 The Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies (ANZFAS) is a federal umbrella body representing more than fifty animal welfare, animal rights and conservation organisations of various types. It was formed in 1980 to promote the cause of animal welfare in Australia and New Zealand. The main areas of concern can be summarised as livestock, wildlife, animal experimentation, companion animals and, animals used in sport and entertainment.

4.5 ANZFAS considers that intensive systems of animal husbandry are those most criticised from the point of view of welfare. Criticism, however, is sometimes dismissed as ill-informed, if well meaning, anthropomorphism.¹

4.6 ANZFAS submits that intensive animal production demonstrably causes suffering to animals and that to justify the continuation of this suffering is tantamount to saying that ethics have no place in our decisions about animal husbandry.²

4.7 Physical and psychological stress associated with close confinement, high stocking densities, lack of access to outdoors and certain husbandry practices (mutilation) underlies much of the concern expressed by ANZFAS. Basically ANZFAS disapproves of the degree of confinement which frustrates most of the major activities which make up an animal's natural behaviour.

4.8 ANZFAS recommendations relating to intensive livestock production are at Appendix 3.

Australian Council of Egg Producers

4.9 The Australian Council of Egg Producers (ACEP), established in 1962, is a federal organisation which represents Australia's 2,400 commercial egg producers. The organisation's

primary aim is to ensure that the interests of egg producers in Australia are represented to the relevant government and non-government bodies. The Association's main objectives are:

- to collect relevant statistical and other information on the egg industry, locally, nationally and overseas;
- to make submissions to Federal and State Governments on matters pertaining to the Australian egg industry; and
- to co-operate with other primary producer organisations in matters of common interest.³

4.10 All six State egg producer organisations are affiliated with and provide delegates to the ACEP Council.

4.11 ACEP submits that the current intensive poultry production system ensures that hens are kept in an environment which, in an overall sense, has the potential to maximise the welfare of laying hens.⁴

4.12 The Association recognises a perfect welfare environment for hens is not attainable because of a combination of factors but supports systems of production which approach an ideal welfare environment.

4.13 The Association considers that the caged layer system continues to satisfy the overall welfare needs of hens in a commercial farming environment to a greater extent than other production systems based on the experience of Australian and overseas egg producers and current research.

4.14 ACEP also believes there is a close link between animal welfare and the interests of consumers insofar as egg production is concerned. This allows the industry to pass on the economic benefits of such systems to consumers.

4.15 However, ACEP recognises that the rights of consumers are important insofar as egg production systems are concerned and therefore commercial egg producers are prepared to satisfy particular niche markets where groups of consumers have preferences for eggs produced from other than cage systems. Producers in all systems will seek to maximise the welfare of hens within constraints associated with particular production systems.⁵

4.16 ACEP supports and funds research into the welfare aspects of commercial egg production systems in Australia and believes that the current research effort will ensure that the welfare needs of laying hens are addressed.

Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals Inc.

4.17 The Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals (AFWA) is an animal dependent body, formed in May 1987, with the 'objective of restoring sanity and balance to the animal welfare debate'. Its philosophy is that it is up to an informed society to make decisions about the acceptability of various forms of human dependence on animals such as in the production of animals for food or scientific research for human health. It believes that it is legitimate for humans to use animals provided this is done in a humane caring way according to appropriate codes of practice that emphasise animal welfare.⁶

4.18 AFWA's aim is to promote humane treatment of animals through the promotion of codes of practice, education and peer pressure.⁷

4.19 The membership of AFWA reflects the scope of animal based industries in Australia. It includes primary producer groups, research scientists, educationists, commercial support groups, processors and retailers, recreation groups, custodians, and professional associations. Included in the latter is the Australian Veterinary Association. Membership details are at Appendix 4.

4.20 AFWA's concerns are based on the fact that most Australians live in cities and rarely experience modern farming systems. This lack of knowledge often results in negative reactions to animal production systems.⁸

4.21 AFWA believes there are three ways to approach welfare issues: the political, the philosophical and the objective or scientific aspects. It believes the political aspects are often based on biased community perceptions and the philosophical aspects conflicting.⁹ AFWA believes that objective scientific criteria are important for the assessment of the welfare of intensively housed stock¹⁰ and that such data should be presented to the community so that an informed opinion can be reached.¹¹

Australian Pig Industry Policy Council

4.22 The Australian Pig Industry Policy Council established under the provisions of Part III, Section 53 of the Pig Industry Act No. 157 of 1986 forms part of the statutory arrangements for the Australian pig industry. The objective of the Council is to provide a forum for the discussion of matters affecting the industry, and in which industry policy can be established.¹²

4.23 There are six constituent members of the Australian Pig Industry Policy Council (APIPC). Member organisations of the APIPC are:

- Australian Pork Producers' Federation
- Pig Research Council
- Australian Pork Corporation
- National Smallgoods Council
- Stockfeed Manufacturers' Association
- National Meat Processors' Association.

4.24 Within the Australian Pork Producers' Federation (APPF), there are six constituent member organisations which represent pig farmers in individual States and one, the special interests of intensive pork producers. Member organisations of the APPF are:

- Intensive Pig Producers of Australia
- Victorian Farmers' Federation (VFF Pig Commodity Council)
- NSW Farmers' Association (NSW Pig Producers' Council)
- Queensland Pork Producers' Organisation
- Tasmanian Farmers' and Graziers' Association (State Pork and Bacon Industry Division)
- United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia (Commercial Pig Section)
- West Australian Pig Producers' Association.

4.25 Members of the Pig Research Council and the Australian Pork Corporation are appointed by the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy on the recommendation of ministerially appointed selection committees. The National Smallgoods Council, the Stockfeed Manufacturers' Association and the National Meat Processors' Association are the relevant national bodies representing the interests of the meat processing and stockfeed industries throughout Australia.¹³

4.26 The Australian Pig Industry Policy Council submits that it, in principle and practice, is committed to safeguarding and actively promoting the welfare of pigs in Australia. The Council believes in the need to actively promote animal welfare as a means of ensuring high levels of livestock productivity and the profitability of the industry. The Committee believes that animal welfare and sound piggery management are inexorably linked.¹⁴

4.27 It is actively involved in the development and promotion of education, research and awareness raising of welfare issues within and outside the industry and welcomes objective and rational debate on the subject.¹⁵

4.28 The Council recognises community concerns about animal welfare but is concerned about the influence of certain elements of the 'emotionally based' arguments might have on what should be an objective and rational debate.¹⁶

Australian Poultry Industries Association

4.29 The Australian Poultry Industries Association (APIA) is a national industry organisation whose member companies produce between 80-85 per cent of all commercial chicken meat processed in Australia.¹⁷

4.30 Membership of the APIA is voluntary and each company engaged in the industry is eligible for membership. The objectives for which the Association was established are, among other things, to promote and protect the interests of the chicken meat industry, to collect and circulate to members technical, statistical and other information, and to promote improvements and uniformity in the law, policies and regulations.¹⁸

4.31 Members of the Association were actively involved in the preparation of the first Code of Practice for the Welfare of the Domestic Fowl. Members have been involved in revisions of the Code from time to time and have also been involved in and supported research into aspects of poultry welfare.¹⁹

4.32 The Association and its members are acutely aware of the interaction of bird welfare and efficient chicken meat production and are therefore totally committed to poultry welfare.²⁰

Australian Veterinary Association

4.33 The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the peak body of the veterinary profession in Australia. Its purpose is to serve the needs of the profession and to promote animal health,

productivity and welfare. The Association has an Animal Welfare Standing Committee and Special Interest Groups to advise it on matters relating to animal welfare. Special Interest Groups in this context are the Australian Veterinary Poultry Association and the Australian Association of Pig Veterinarians.

4.34 Veterinarians are closely involved with intensive livestock industries, in regulatory matters related to control of disease outbreaks and in matters of production, disease prevention and treatment.²¹

4.35 The AVA considers that animal welfare and human needs must be considered at the same time, and policies on each must be complementary, not detrimental, to the other. It believes that this balanced approach is practical and achievable.²² It acknowledges problems in the present systems but argues that for the most part intensive methods equal good animal husbandry and such environments are superior to the extremes of extensive systems.

4.36 It also considers that to properly address the issues of animal welfare it is necessary to reliably assess and precisely define the actual and specific welfare needs of each type and group of animals.

4.37 AVA believes:

It is inevitable that trends in one direction will sometimes be perceived to conflict with progress in another. These complex issues involve and evoke emotions which can confuse a balanced assessment. Extremists, who wilfully remain ignorant and intolerant of the opinions and needs of others, tend to dominate debate and the real issues become lost in the process. Fortunately, the attitudes of most people in the community are more moderate.²³

4.38 AVA summaries and general recommendations on pig and poultry production are at Appendix 5.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
(Australia)

4.39 The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Australia was established in 1984 as a national co-ordinating body of state and territory RSPCA's.

4.40 RSPCA Australia believes that no animal should be used for the production of food or fibre, either by farming practice, transportation, or method of slaughter which in any way may cause suffering, injury or distress.²⁴

4.41 It argues that the acceptability of intensive systems will be determined from the animal welfare viewpoint by three basic criteria.

1. Is it in the animal's best interest (weather, predators, health)?
2. Do the animals have sufficient freedom to follow normal behavioural and physiological patterns?
3. Is it necessary in this climate for animals not susceptible to problems with predators and health associated with extensive farming?

4.42 Statements of RSPCA Australia's position on intensive animal systems are at Appendix 6.

ENDNOTES

1. Evidence, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. S8822.
2. *ibid.*
3. Australian Council of Egg Producers, Submission, dated March 1984, pp. 2-4.
4. Australian Council of Egg Producers, letter dated 1 May 1990.
5. *ibid.*
6. Introductory address by Dr George Alexander, President, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, at launch of Association, 8 May 1987.
7. Evidence, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. S8931.
8. *ibid.*
9. *ibid.*, p. S8932.
10. *ibid.*, p. S8943.
11. *ibid.*, p. S8932.
12. Australian Pig Industry Policy Council, Annual Report, 1988-89, p. 2.
13. Evidence, Australian Pig Industry Policy Council, p. S8790.
14. *ibid.*, p. S8788.

15. *ibid.*, p. S8788-9.
16. *ibid.*, p. S8789.
17. Australian Poultry Industries Association, letter dated 5 June 1990.
18. Australian Poultry Industries Association Constitution and Rules.
19. Australian Poultry Industries Association, letter dated 5 June 1990.
20. *ibid.*
21. Evidence, Australian Veterinary Association, p. S9020.
22. *ibid.*, p. S8766.
23. *ibid.*, p. S8768.
24. Evidence, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Australia, p. S9046.
25. *ibid.*, p. S9100.