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ACN 108 494 631

12 March 2008

Ms Jeanette Radcliffe
Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members

Submission on the Inquiry into Climate Change and the Australian Agricultural Sector

I am writing on behalf of Voiceless, the fund for animals, to make a submission on Climate Change and the Australian Agriculture Sector which I understand is the subject of a current Inquiry by the Committee.

Enclosed, for your consideration, is a copy of Voiceless's submission to the Inquiry.

Voiceless considers the connection between livestock production and climate change to be of paramount importance and as such, I propose to shortly issue a media release alerting the public to our position on this issue. Bearing in mind that Submissions become Committee documents and are only made public after consideration by the Committee, I ask the Committee to make Voiceless's Submission public at your earliest convenience. I understand that the Committee will next be meeting on 18 March 2008 and would be grateful if you could contact Voiceless's Corporate Counsel, Katrina Sharman, on (02) 9357 0713 or by e.mail at ksharman@voiceless.org.au as soon as possible after that meeting in that regard.

By way of background, for those Committee members who I have not corresponded with previously, Voiceless is a non-profit organisation for animals in Australia which I established with my daughter Ondine in 2004. Our mission is to promote respect and compassion for animals, increase awareness of the conditions in which they live and to take action to protect them from suffering.

J.M. Coetzee (Nobel Prize for Literature Winner 2003 and author of 'Lives of Animals' and 'Elizabeth Costello') is a patron and acclaimed Australian actors Hugo Weaving and Abbie Cornish are our Ambassadors.

Although Voiceless engages in a range of activities, our legal arm seeks to:

1. Influence law reform to improve legal protections for animals;
2. Monitor and promote the enforcement of laws relating to animals; and

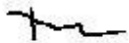
voiceless envisions a world in which animals are treated with respect and compassion.
voiceless ltd. is a non-profit australian organisation established by the sherman family in 2004.

3. Facilitate the development of animal law as a legal discipline.

I hope that you will consider the enclosed Submission favourably, as Voiceless is of the view that there is an irrefutable link between livestock production and climate change – a link that must be given immediate and serious consideration in developing any strategy that aims to reduce livestock-related greenhouse gas emissions.

If the Committee or any of its members would like to meet the Voiceless team to discuss any aspect of our Submission, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Sharman using the contact details provided above.

Yours sincerely



Brian Sherman AM
Director



A SUBMISSION BY VOICELESS TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

March 2008



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ABOUT VOICELESS

As an innovator, capacity builder and ideas-generator, Voiceless plays a leading role in the development of a cutting edge social justice movement, animal protection.

With a highly professional and well-educated team, Voiceless brings together like-minded compassionate Australians from the legal, academic, non-profit and education sectors to form strong and effective networks.

Voiceless believes in the provision of quality information, analysis and resources to inspire debate and discussion and to empower individuals and organisations to generate positive social change.

Voiceless is a non-profit Australian organisation established in May 2004 by father and daughter team Brian and Ondine Sherman.

To build and fortify the animal protection movement, Voiceless:

- gives grants to key projects which create the groundswell for social change;
- cultivates the animal law community through the provision of leadership, educational opportunities and resources; and
- raises awareness of animal protection issues within the education system in order to strengthen democratic skills, promote critical thinking and encourage advocacy amongst students.

PATRONS

J.M. COETZEE, Nobel Prize for Literature Winner 2003,
author of 'Lives of Animals' and 'Elizabeth Costello'

BRIAN SHERMAN AM, businessman and philanthropist

AMBASSADOR

HUGO WEAVING, Actor

The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert, Matrix Trilogy, Lord of the Rings Trilogy

ANIMAL CLUB AMBASSADOR

ABBIE CORNISH, Actor

Somersault, Candy, A Good Year

For further information visit <http://www.voiceless.org.au>

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1 Preliminary Comments

- 1.1 On 19 September 2007, the Senate announced that the Rural and Regional Services and Transport Committee would undertake an Inquiry into climate change and the Australian agricultural sector (the Inquiry). The Inquiry lapsed, but was re-adopted on 14 February 2008 with the terms of reference unchanged. Those terms of reference are:
- (a) the scientific evidence available on the likely future climate of Australia's key agricultural production zones, and its implications for current farm enterprises and possible future industries;
 - (b) the need for a national strategy to assist Australian agricultural industries to adapt to climate change; and
 - (c) the adequacy of existing drought assistance and exceptional circumstances programs to cope with long-term climactic changes.
- 1.2 Voiceless welcomes this Inquiry and considers the Inquiry to be a valuable opportunity to address the issues raised above. For the purposes of this submission, Voiceless will confine its comments to subsection ii) of the Inquiry's terms of reference (paragraph 1.1(b) above). In particular, Voiceless will outline why any national strategy for climate change must recognise that the intensive nature of livestock farming is one of the primary factors contributing to global warming. Voiceless's submission will argue that a decrease in meat consumption, together with a reduction in intensive livestock production, are fundamental aspects to consider when addressing the issue of climate change.
- 1.3 Each year more than 60 billion animals are slaughtered for food worldwide - to feed 6 billion people¹. Of these:
- (a) Over 45 billion chickens are killed for meat².
 - (b) 5 billion hens are kept to lay eggs³, over 13 million of which are in Australia with approximately 90% of these housed in battery cages⁴.
 - (c) 1 billion pigs are killed for pork products⁵, over 5 million of which are in Australia⁶ and over 95% of these are in intensive or semi-intensive conditions.⁷
- 1.4 Voiceless submits that there is irrefutable evidence linking the extensive consumption of meat with the present rate of climate change.

2 Worldwide Meat Consumption

- 2.1 Around the world, demand for meat is growing and consumption of animal products such as eggs and dairy has also rapidly increased. To cater for this increased global appetite, farming practices have changed and modernised. For the most part, farms are no longer outside, but *inside* – the farming of livestock has effectively moved indoors. Each year, billions of animals are warehoused in giant sheds from birth to

¹ World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), 'Cruel Pig Slaughter' <http://wspafarmwelfare.org/pig/> at 11 March 2008.

² Compassion in World Farming Trust (CIWF), 'Broiler Chickens' (January 2004), p. 1.

³ CIWF, 'Layer Hens' (January 2004), p. 1.

⁴ Australian Egg Corporation Limited, *Egg industry facts*, <http://www.eggs.org.au/index.asp?pageid=197> at 30 January 2008.

⁵ CIWF, 'Animal welfare aspects of Good Agricultural Practice: Pig Production' (2006), p. 9.

⁶ Australian Pork Limited, 'Australian Pig Annual 2005' (2006), p. 22.

⁷ Animals Australia *SaveBabe.com*, <http://www.savebabe.com/change.php> at 30 January 2008.

death, hidden beneath a veil of secrecy. Today's intensive or 'factory farming' practices (which include the confinement of farm animals in battery cages, sow stalls, feedlots and broiler sheds) focus on producing animal products as quickly and cheaply as possible using the fewest resources. The interests of most farm animals, who are sentient beings and who suffer tremendously, are generally disregarded during this process.

- 2.2 Factory farming has been defined as: "a system of raising animals, using intensive 'production line' methods that maximise the amount of meat produced, while minimising costs. Industrial animal agriculture is characterised by high stocking densities and/or close confinement, forced growth rates, high mechanisation, and low labour requirements... Latterly, the term has been extended to include farming practices that involve the use of transgenetic farm animals."⁸
- 2.3 Statistically, global trends confirm that there has been a dramatic increase in the production of farmed animals. For example, a 2004 survey found that worldwide meat production had increased "roughly fivefold"⁹ in the second half of the 20th Century.¹⁰ In just ten years (from 1995 to 2005), the number of mammals used for meat and dairy production increased by 22% to 4.1 billion, whilst the number of poultry used to produce meat and eggs increased by 40% to 57.4 billion.¹¹
- 2.4 It is clear that, on a global scale, humans are now consuming and producing more meat than ever before. In Voiceless's view, aside from the staggering effect that current levels of meat production are having on the lives of animals, there are compelling environmental reasons why intensive farming practices should be reconsidered in any national strategy for the agricultural industry to adapt to climate change.

3 Australian Meat Consumption

- 3.1 Global patterns in meat production and consumption are mirrored in Australia. On average, Australians are already consuming a staggering amount of meat, with each Australian eating almost 110 kilograms of meat per year¹² – which is the equivalent of more than half a cow, 50 chickens and 1 pig.¹³ Between 1970-1971 and 2002-2003, the volume of pig production in Australia increased by 130%.¹⁴ Australians are now eating over 21 kilograms of pig meat¹⁵ and over 35 kilograms of beef¹⁶ each year.
- 3.2 Australia's consumption of chicken meat has increased 600% over the past 40 years, with the average Australian now eating over 36 kilograms each year.¹⁷ To satisfy Australia's hunger for chicken meat, Australia slaughtered more than 450 million chickens in 2006-07.¹⁸

⁸ Milestone, E. & Lang, T. (2003), *The Penguin Atlas of Food*, Penguin Books, London, pp36-37; Lymbery P (2004), World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA); quoted in WSPA (2005), *Industrial Animal Agriculture; the next global health crisis*, p. 11.

⁹ CIWF, 'The Global Benefits of Eating Less Meat' (2004), p. 8.

¹⁰ Compassion in World Farming 2007, 'Global Warning: Climate Change & Farm Animal Welfare' (2007), p. 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 'Meat: Outlook for beef and veal, sheep meat, pigs and poultry to 2011-12' http://www.abareconomics.com/interactive/ac_mar07/htm/meat.htm at 5 March 2008.

¹³ Adapted from Delgado, C., et al. (1999) *Livestock to 2020; The Next Food Revolution* (International Food Policy research Institute, Washington DC); quoted in WSPA (2005), *Industrial Animal Agriculture; the next global health crisis*, p. 7.

¹⁴ Productivity Commission 2005, *Australian Pigmeat Industry*, Report no 35, Melbourne, p.9

<http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiry/pigmeat/docs/finalreport>.

¹⁵ University of Sydney and CSIRO, *Balancing Act: A triple bottom line analysis of the Australian economy*, Volume 2 (2005) p. 34.

¹⁶ Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, above n12 at 11 March 2008.

¹⁷ Australian Chicken Meat Federation, *From Hatchery to Home*, 2007.

¹⁸ Australian Chicken Meat Federation, *Industry Facts and Figures*, <http://www.chicken.org.au/page.php?id=4> at 30 January 2008.

- 3.3 By 2030, the CSIRO has predicted that there will be an average annual warming of 0.4 to 2 degrees Celsius.¹⁹ Voiceless submits that an Australian strategy for combating global warming must take into account the effects of factory farming and further, that any strategy should include steps to reduce Australia's insatiable appetite for meat.

4 Links Between Factory Farming and Climate Change

- 4.1 There is an undeniable link between the mass production of livestock and greenhouse pollution. It has recently been observed that while coal is often seen as the major threat to the environment, it is actually cattle that will have the biggest impact on the climate during the next 20 years.²⁰
- 4.2 The most important greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O). In modern times, the major increase in the concentrations of the above gases has been attributed to the use of fossil fuels and changes to the way land is used.²¹
- 4.3 The livestock sector has emerged as one of the most significant contributors to the more serious environmental problems, with farmed animals now producing more greenhouse gas emissions than the world's entire transport system.²² According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, animal production is presently responsible for 18% of all human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.²³
- 4.4 Livestock-related global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions arise mainly from the following sources:
- (a) The production of animal manure which releases both methane and nitrous oxide. According to the FAO, "manure-induced soil emissions are clearly the largest livestock source of N₂O [nitrous oxide] worldwide".²⁴
 - (b) The digestive processes of animals which produce sizeable amounts of methane;
 - (c) The production of animal feed for consumption by the billions of animals housed in factory farms across the world. Approximately one-third of the world's total cereal crop and over 90% of the world's soya crop are grown specifically for animal feed. These crops use numerous resources, such as land, machinery, transport and fertiliser – all of which can emit carbon dioxide and other harmful emissions²⁵; and
 - (d) Deforestation relating to cattle grazing and the production of animal feed. Deforestation results in the emission of large amounts of CO₂ and, globally, is the biggest factor contributing to livestock-related GHG emissions.²⁶
- 4.5 The 2005 Australian report, *Balancing Act*, by the University of Sydney and the CSIRO, identified that meat production not only produces significant levels of GHG emissions, but also utilises other precious natural resources. For example, to produce one kilogram of beef causes 36.4 kilograms of GHG emissions, releases 340 grams of sulphur dioxide and 59 grams of phosphate and consumes 169 megajoules of energy,

¹⁹ CSIRO, 'Climate Change Impacts for Australia', (2001), p.1.

²⁰ Geoff Russell, Submission to the Hon. Julie Bishop, Minister for Science, 'Red Meat, Climate Change, Colorectal Cancer and the CSIRO Diet' (Version 1.6 – January 2007), p. 3.

²¹ EarthSave International, 'Why it's green to go vegetarian' (2005), p. 5.

²² Ibid.

²³ Steinfeld, H et al, 'Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options, Food and Agricultural Organisation' (2006), p. xxi.

²⁴ CIWF, above n9, 2.1

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

as well as using hundreds of litres of water and contributing to the disturbance of almost 200 square metres of land.²⁷

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Over the last few decades, profit-driven animal industries in developed countries have adapted their production methods to focus on the goals of increasing output and reducing costs. In the livestock industry, this drive for efficiency has led to the adoption of a plethora of intensive or factory farming production methods such as battery cages, sow stalls, feedlots and broiler sheds, all of which have become symbols of the unacceptable face of factory farming.
- 5.2 A recent study published in the medical journal, *The Lancet* concludes that people in wealthy countries (such as Australia) should more than halve their daily meat intake, particularly red meat, over the next 40 years to help reduce emissions, with the long-term goal of cutting average meat consumption worldwide to 90 grams a day by 2050.²⁸
- 5.3 In summary, it is vital for the Australian Government to recognise the importance of implementing a strategy that aims to reduce livestock-related greenhouse gas emissions. Voiceless submits that only a reduction in meat consumption and intensive livestock production can effectively address the issue of global warming and slow the pace of climate change. In Voiceless's view, there are more compelling reasons why the Government should seek to reduce meat production by putting an end to intensive farming practices. These are of course, the lives of animals, who deserve to be treated with respect and compassion, values that have to date been largely disregarded by those persons responsible for determining the direction of Australia's livestock sector. This Inquiry provides a valuable opportunity to reconsider that strategy and to identify a new course for Australia and a more promising future for the Australian people, its environment and all of its inhabitants.

²⁷ Daniele Fanelli, 'Meat is murder on the environment' *NewScientist Environment*, 16 July 2007.

²⁸ Minchin, L 'Limit Meat Eating to Tackle Climate Change: Study' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September 2007.