

Animal Protection Bill

Debate between animal activists and the livestock sector continued recently as Senator Chris Back's private member's Bill was debated in the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee inquiry into the *Criminal Code Amendment (Animal Protection) Bill 2015*. Far from what some suggest the laws as being "ag-gag" laws, the Bill has two key provisions, in summary:

- Visual evidence of malicious cruelty must be reported in timely manner in order to prevent further cruelty from occurring;
- The protection of lawfully operating animal enterprises by not allowing them to be interfered with.

Both WoolProducers and Sheepmeat Council made submissions to the Inquiry supporting the intents and purposes of the Bill. Early reporting of the acts of cruelty which were shown in an online video last year would have prevented much of the cruelty shown. Using footage for political purposes does not allow the sheep industries to act in good faith, or allow the relevant authorities to assess the evidence and charge individuals if appropriate to the state laws under which the acts were committed.

As the vast majority of Australian farm businesses are family owned, trespass on to properties not only threatens genuine biosecurity measures but also equates 'farm raids' with home invasions. Both SCA and WPA support the rights of groups or individuals to legally protest, and this Bill does not prevent rights groups from having their say – and both our organisations strongly believe no-one should take vigilante action to prove their point.

