

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

19 March 2015

Via email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

RE: Criminal Code Amendment (Animal Protection) Bill 2015

WoolProducers Australia (WPA) welcomes the opportunity to respond the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee inquiry into the *Criminal Code Amendment (Animal Protection) Bill 2015*.

WPA supports the two main intentions of the Bill:

1. Division 383 – Failing to report malicious cruelty to animals – aimed at reducing further malicious cruelty to animals through timely reporting of visual evidence of animal cruelty; and,
2. Division 385 – Interfering with the carrying on of animal enterprises - the protection of lawfully operating animal enterprises.

Please do not hesitate to contact the WoolProducers Australia office if you would like further clarification on this submission.

Sincerely



Richard Halliday
President

WOOLPRODUCERS AUSTRALIA - INTRODUCTION

WoolProducers Australia is the peak industry body for Australian wool growers, advocating for them, and a unified wool industry, in policy decisions at a national level.

WoolProducers Australia is a representative, democratic organisation that is driven by grower feedback, through our three independently elected Director and our State Farming Organisations members, including:

- AgForce Queensland
- New South Wales Farmers Association
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
- Livestock South Australia
- Western Australian Farmers Federation

Wool growers hold membership of WPA either directly or through membership of their State Farming Organisation.

WPA believes that animal welfare is the highest priority for the vast majority of Australian wool growers reflecting the intrinsic relationship between healthy, well cared-for animals and productivity/profitability.

In stating this WPA acknowledges the need for ongoing improvement of welfare practices across the wool industry and continues to dedicate significant resources to this issue.

Examples of this commitment include integral involvement into the development of international animal welfare guidelines for wool sheep¹, research and development² and active participation in the development of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep³.

WPA has zero tolerance for animal cruelty. WPA regards any livestock owner/manager that commits acts of cruelty to animals as being one of the biggest threats to the on-going viability of the Australian wool industry, and firmly believes they have no place in industry as they jeopardise the reputation of the vast majority of producers who value and care for their animals.

¹ http://www.iwto.org/uploaded/publications/WEB_IWTO_Sheep_Welfare_Guidelines_Web.pdf

² <http://www.woolproducers.com.au/media-releases/?news=318>

³ <http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/files/2011/02/Sheep-Standards-and-Guidelines-for-Endorsement-May-2014-080714.pdf>

SUMMARY

WPA supports the stated intention of this Bill of ensuring that animals are protected against potential ongoing cruelty caused by delays in reporting evidence or recording of malicious cruelty to domestic animals.

By ensuring that any evidence of animal cruelty is reported to relevant authorities in a timely fashion will only enhance the intended aim of the Bill - animal protection.

WPA also views the second primary intent of the Bill regarding the prevention of illegal interference in the lawful operation of animal enterprises as being of equal importance.

Illegal entry to farm enterprises not only cause disruption to routine operations of these businesses but also compromise existing on-farm welfare and biosecurity measures.

Primary producers deserve protection from these type of threats, as would any other type of lawful business operating in this country.

Specific comments on the draft legislation

Division 383 – Failing to report malicious cruelty to animals

WPA supports swift reporting of animal abuse in order that prevent potential prolonged animal suffering.

The proposed one business day timeframe for reporting will need further consideration or caveats for flexibility. Whilst the aim of prompt reporting is to cease any potential suffering caused to animals, it may unintentionally deter people from reporting incidents completely if they are unable to provide the evidence, due to geographical or technological reasons within that timeframe. Collation of evidence of multiple incidents before notification should not be considered a viable reason for delays in reporting to relevant authorities.

Division 385 – Interfering with the carrying on of animal enterprises

Given that the proposed amendments to this Bill does not preclude people legally supporting a cause, WPA strongly supports the intention of this amendment.

Those that make a living from livestock conduct their business in compliance with numerous pieces of regulation and legislation, just like any other Australian business owner. Therefore they are entitled to legally conduct their business without fear of intimidation or trespass.

The increasing incidence of vandalism and trespass conducted by animal rights activists pose significant risks to rigorous business practices that are implemented by producers, including animal welfare and biosecurity measures. This amendment seeks to address this increasing concern.