



The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for New England

Ref: MS16-001333

05 MAY 2016

Senator the Hon. Bill Heffernan
Chair
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Senator Heffernan *B. J.*

Please find enclosed a copy of the Australian Government response to the Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee Report – Voice for Animals (Independent Office of Animal Welfare) Bill 2015. The response was presented to the President of the Senate today.

Thank you for the committee's interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Barnaby Joyce MP

Enc.



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Senate Rural and
Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
report:

Voice for animals (Independent Office of Animal
Welfare) Bill 2015

February 2016

Introduction

The Australian Government welcomes the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee report on the *Voice for Animals (Independent Office of Animal Welfare) Bill 2015*.

The Australian Government supports the committee's recommendation not to pass this bill; and agrees that the substantive functions of the proposed statutory authority for animal welfare are already achieved through existing government mechanisms.

Australia's three tiers of government each have animal welfare responsibilities, which vary between jurisdictions. Legislative responsibility for animal welfare in Australia rests primarily with state and territory governments, and local governments. The Australian Government's policies for animal welfare arise from specific powers in relation to external trade and treaties. All governments are concerned about animal welfare and do not condone animal cruelty.

The Australian Government works with the Australian livestock industry to improve the productivity and profitability of the industry, and farm gate returns. There is a strong link between sustainability, animal welfare and livestock industry profitability. Improved animal welfare contributes to:

- increased productivity – improved animal welfare practices lead to contented, healthier animals that produce a higher-quality, higher-value and safer product
- improved competitiveness – systems that are underpinned by robust animal welfare arrangements are likely to improve access of products to domestic and export markets, and achieve higher prices
- sustainability – community acceptance of livestock animal welfare arrangements leads to better market access, higher prices and greater long-term sustainability of livestock industries.

The success of Australia's livestock industries will be increasingly influenced by research, development and strategies that improve animal welfare outcomes.

The Australian Government does not consider the establishment of a new Commonwealth agency necessary to influence issues relating to animal welfare. The Australia Government maintains that the establishment of such an Independent Office of Animal Welfare will result in significant cost to the Commonwealth. In addition to adding a layer of bureaucracy, an independent agency would require enabling legislation, relocations costs and ongoing specialist expertise.

The Australian Government notes the Australian Greens dissenting report to the committee's report. The Australian Government notes the Greens have committed to further consultation with stakeholders to refine and redraft the bill.

Government response:

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the bill not be passed.

Agreed

The Australian Government supports the committee's recommendation not to pass this bill.