



SUBMISSION ON THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING TO SUPPORT FUTURE DEMAND IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS IN AUSTRALIA

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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:

- Creates and fosters networks of leading lawyers, politicians, businesspeople and academics to influence law, policy, business and public opinion;
- Conducts high quality research and analysis of animal industries, exposing legalised cruelty and promoting informed debate;
- Creates a groundswell for social change by building and fortifying the Australian animal protection movement with select grants and prizes;
- Grows animal law as a mainstream practice area to advocate for change in the courts and in legislation; and
- Informs consumers and empowers them to make animal-friendly choices.

PATRONS

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

BRIAN SHERMAN AM, businessman and philanthropist

DR JANE GOODALL, world-renowned primatologist and animal advocate

THE HON MICHAEL KIRBY AC CMG, former justice of the High Court of Australia

AMBASSADORS

HUGO WEAVING, Actor

Last Ride, Little Fish, Lord of the Rings Trilogy, Matrix Trilogy, The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert, Oranges and Sunshine

EMILY BARCLAY, Actor

Prime Mover, Piece of my Heart, Suburban Mayhem, In My Father's Den

ABBIE CORNISH, Actor

Bright Star, Stop Loss, Elizabeth: The Golden Age, Somersault, Candy, A Good Year, Suckerpunch, Limitless

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

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The terms of reference to be considered by the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee during this inquiry relate to the provision and content of higher education and skills training for agriculture, the adequacy of current educational arrangements in meeting Australia's agricultural labour market needs, and the impact of any supply and demand discrepancies on business, research and more broadly, the economy.
- 1.2 This submission is not intended to deal with each of the terms of reference. Rather, Voiceless takes this opportunity to comment on only one term of reference, the incorporation of animal welfare principles in agriculture education.

2 Importance of incorporating animal welfare principles in agriculture education

- 2.1 The Australian Government has identified that there is a labour and skills shortage in the agriculture industry. A reason for this shortage is the poor image associated with working within the agriculture industry, including the poor image associated with the level of animal cruelty that exists within the industry.¹
- 2.2 Animal cruelty in the agriculture industry exists on a massive scale.² With consumer awareness growing, including awareness of the cruelty inflicted on a daily basis, the agriculture industry needs to take steps to ensure that animal well-being is adequately addressed.
- 2.3 One way of addressing the agriculture industry's poor image, specifically as it relates to animal cruelty, is to incorporate animal welfare principles into agriculture education.
- 2.4 Internationally, and to some extent nationally, the incorporation of animal welfare principles into agriculture education has been widely recognised. Europe is generally at the forefront having a number of initiatives for animal welfare in education.³

¹ Industries Development Committee Workforce, Training and Skills Working Group 'A report to the Primary Industries Ministerial Council by the Industries Development Committee Workforce, Training and Skills Working Group' (Final Report, October 2009) <http://www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1530020/work-train-skills.pdf>.

² See for example <http://www.voiceless.org.au/The_Issues/Fact_Sheets/Factory_Farming.html>.

³ Directorate-General for Health and Consumers, *Animal Welfare Education: Tools & Programs*, <<http://www.animalwelfare-education.eu/tools-programs.html>>.

- 2.5 Some of the needs identified for animal welfare education include the growing acceptance of animals as sentient beings and increasing legal responsibilities when it comes to the care of and duties owing to animals.⁴
- 2.6 Animals are sentient beings and should be treated in such a way that acknowledges their capacity to experience and feel. More specifically, animals should be provided with the "Five Freedoms"⁵, that is:
- (a) freedom from hunger and thirst;
 - (b) freedom from discomfort;
 - (c) freedom from pain, injury and disease;
 - (d) freedom to express normal behaviour; and
 - (e) freedom from fear and distress.
- 2.7 An important factor in ensuring that animals are provided with the Five Freedoms is the knowledge and skill level of those working in the agriculture industry. It is believed that animal welfare education can develop an understanding of animal sentience, which will help facilitate positive attitudes and behaviour towards animals.⁶
- 2.8 The experience in Europe is that farmers who acquired new skills in animal welfare took better care of their animals. Also animal transporters were able to appreciate the merits of avoiding stress to animals en route and new practices involving pre-slaughter stunning in abattoirs have been promoted so that animals suffer less pain at the point of slaughter.⁷
- 2.9 As knowledge and awareness of animals' sentience grows, we see changes in legislative responsibilities necessitating a greater awareness of those responsibilities by industry and even an increase of those responsibilities. The agriculture industry needs to be aware of their legal responsibilities when it comes to the treatment of animals and therefore it is vital that higher education for the agriculture industry include a component on the laws that affect the industry.

⁴ Alistair Lawrence, *Animal Welfare Education: Evidence for Action* (Paper presented at International Conference on Animal Welfare Education: Everyone is Responsible, Brussels, 1-2 October 2010) 10-11 < http://www.animalwelfare-education.eu/fileadmin/content/PDF/dg_sanco_conference_book.pdf>.

⁵ RSPCA Australia, RSPCA Australia Knowledgebase *Five freedoms for animals* (12 June 2009) <http://kb.rspca.org.au/Five-freedoms-for-animals_318.html>.

⁶ Ibid, 10.

⁷ John Dalli, *Foreword* (Paper presented at International Conference on Animal Welfare Education: Everyone is Responsible, Brussels, 1-2 October 2010) 4 <http://www.animalwelfare-education.eu/fileadmin/content/PDF/dg_sanco_conference_book.pdf>.

- 2.10 Becoming educated on animal welfare has other benefits as well. It is increasingly accepted that food quality is not only determined by the overall nature and safety of the end product, but also by the perceived welfare status of the animals from which the food was produced.⁸ If the manner in which animals are treated for food production is improved, a greater quality “product” will be produced that satisfies the growing consumer trend for products produced with adequate animal welfare measures. Further, improved animal welfare can lead to economic benefits. Where the standard of animal welfare is superior, the health of the animals will tend to be greater, thereby resulting in reduced expenditure on veterinary medicines, lower mortality rates, better growth rates and better feed conversion.⁹
- 2.11 Animal welfare education will also reinforce the growing awareness of the close links between humans and our environment. Indeed, animal production systems that respect the welfare of animals and the environment result in sustainable incomes for farmers and reduced use of natural resources.¹⁰

3 Suggested approaches for animal welfare in agriculture education

- 3.1 In February 2008, the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Education and Training Working Group released a report on a stocktake of formal and informal education and training about animal welfare in Australia (Stocktake). There were various key insights identified during the Stocktake. The following were identified in respect of livestock/production animals:
- (a) there is variation in the quality and quantity of formal and informal education available about animal welfare for people who rear, handle, transport and slaughter livestock/production animals;
 - (b) there is a need for trainers in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector to be provided with consistent and current information through good resource materials and professional development;
 - (c) there is a need for a coordinated national approach;

⁸ Anne Algers, Berner Lindstrom and Edmond A. Pajor, ‘A New Format for Learning About Farm Animal Welfare’ (2011) *J Agric Environ Ethics*, 368.

⁹ Peter Stevenson, *Farm Animal Law: reflections from the European Union* (Paper presented at Voiceless Annual Animal Law Lecture Series, August 2011) 9

<<http://www.voiceless.org.au/images/stories/law/stevenson%20address%20transcript%20and%20slides%20270911.pdf>>.

¹⁰ Dalli, above n 5.

- (d) assessment for training programs should be competency-based in order to show that an adequate level of skills and knowledge has been achieved.¹¹
- 3.2 The Stocktake also identified the need for sophisticated and flexible education and information approaches and resources, including a better utilisation of web resources. Specifically the Stocktake found that the web is being largely under-utilised by government, education institutions and industry as an animal welfare education medium and that informal providers of animal welfare information, particularly animal interest organisations, appear to be making best use of the web.¹²
- 3.3 The conclusion of the Stocktake report was that *'all animal welfare sectors should consider what opportunities exist to provide coordinated, national approaches to animal welfare education within their sector. Laissez-faire approaches to animal welfare education will not suffice in achieving the goals of the AAWS. A transparent and coordinated national approach to animal welfare education is needed'*.¹³
- 3.4 Various opportunities exist for including animal welfare education in the agriculture industry, such as university courses, continuing education (the latter of which is provided through the VET Sector) and in high school curricula, especially in regional areas where a great number of the agriculture workforce originates.
- 3.5 Ideally, animal welfare should be taught as a specific course as well as being mentioned in other related courses. The course should be designed so that there is a proper focus at all times on animal welfare issues and should include mandatory standards of competency, as has been the case in Britain for the last decade (at least where the transport of animals is concerned).¹⁴
- 3.6 The specific course should include matters of animal welfare science, animal behaviour, animal suffering and pain, ethics, attitudes toward animals and animal law as it applies to the agriculture industry. Included within the course can be elective modules on specific animal usage topics such as farm animal housing systems, good stockmanship, transport of animals, operations on animals, humane slaughter and disease effects on welfare and food and nutrition.¹⁵ It is worthwhile making specific mention of the value in educating on humane slaughter. This is a vital sector for continuing education as it is a sector where animal abuse and poor attitudes to animal welfare are

¹¹ Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, *Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Education and Training Stocktake* (1 February 2008) 2 <http://www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/617974/exec-summary.pdf>.

¹² *Ibid*, 4 – 5.

¹³ *Ibid*, cover letter to Dr John Drinan from Heather Yeatman, 26 March 2008.

¹⁴ Edward Eadie, *Education for Animal Welfare* (Springer-Verlag Berlin And Heidelberg GmbH & Co. K, 2011) 49.

¹⁵ Donald M Broom, 'Animal Welfare Education: Development and Prospects' (2005) 32 (4) *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 439 – 440.

commonplace. Acknowledged expert in 'humane' animal slaughtering techniques, Temple Grandin, regards regular retraining and operational auditing as essential in order to avoid unacceptable worker attitudes and slaughter standards.¹⁶

- 3.7 The World Veterinary Association (WVA) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (Office international des epizooties; OIE) both recommend that animal welfare be taught as a separate compulsory subject, using a problem-based multidisciplinary approach that encourages students to think independently and encompasses ethics, economics and animal behaviour as these relate to animal welfare. The recommendation was made in respect of veterinary courses, but Voiceless believes the recommendation should apply equally to other sectors of the agriculture industry.
- 3.8 A number of education institutions, animal protection organisations and government departments worldwide have created animal welfare education programs that can be utilised for the agriculture industry and these should be considered rather than reinventing the wheel. Information regarding these programs can be accessed at <http://www.animalwelfare-education.eu/tools-programs.html> and include offerings by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the University of Bristol, the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and Compassion in World Farming. Of specific note is the 'Concepts in Animal Welfare' syllabus developed by WSPA in conjunction with Bristol University in England.¹⁷ This syllabus is making a valuable contribution towards improving the lives of animals around the world.¹⁸
- 3.9 As at October 2008, the OIE was planning on building a focused database of animal welfare resources including educational references such as expert identification, opportunities for training and educational materials.¹⁹ Status of this database is uncertain but it would prove a very useful tool for animal welfare education and should be explored further. Another useful database is the *Gateway to Farm Animal Welfare*, an initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.²⁰ The database is an open and transparent resource which provides international and national information relating to farm animal welfare. It is a participatory platform open to a large contributor base where users can retrieve as well as submit information. As well as providing

¹⁶ Eadie, above n 11, 49.

¹⁷ World Society for the Protection of Animals, *Concepts in Animal Welfare*, <<http://www.wspa-international.org/wspaswork/education/concepts-animal-welfare-modules.aspx>>.

¹⁸ Eadie, above n 11, 44.

¹⁹ E A Pajor, S Kahn, and L Suardo, *Animal Welfare Education and Research Resources Database* (Paper presented at OIE Animal Welfare Conference, Cairo, 20-22 October 2008) <http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Conferences_Events/sites/A_AW2008/PDF/Session%20VII/23_OIE_AWCairo_E_Pajor_EN.pdf>.

²⁰ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, *Gateway to Farm Animal Welfare* (9 November 2011) <<http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/animal-welfare/en/>>.

publications, scientific and technical papers and legislation, it also provides training materials and information regarding training and education opportunities in Australia and internationally.

- 3.10 Rather than traditional modes of study such as lectures and on site attendance, consideration should be given to online interactive animal welfare assessment courses²¹, such as the *Animal Welfare Assessment* course offered by Michigan State University²² and the Certificate in Animal Welfare course offered by the University of Cambridge²³. Online courses offer flexibility and enable consistent education across teaching facilities in Australia and internationally.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 It is vital that animal welfare principles be incorporated into agriculture education. This is due primarily to the sentience of animals and the consumer's desire for ethically produced products. With a higher educated agriculture industry, we will see improved attitudes and behaviour towards animals, increased consumer satisfaction and a reinforced awareness of the close links between humans and our environment.

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Hatten, Legal Counsel, Voiceless

²¹ Janice M Siegford, Theresa M Bernardo, Robert P Malinowski, Kirsty Laughlin, and Adroaldo J Zanella, 'Integrating Animal Welfare into Veterinary Education: Using an Online, Interactive Course' (2005) 32 (4), *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 498 – 502.

²² Michigan State University, Animal Behaviour & Welfare Group, *ANS805 Animal Welfare Assessment* (1 January 2011) <<http://animalwelfare.msu.edu/animalwelfare/ans805>>.

²³ Cambridge University, Cambridge E-Learning Institute, *Online Certificate in Animal Welfare*, <http://www.cambridge-elearning.com/animal_welfare.html>.