

Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Inquiry into the National Animal Welfare Bill 2005

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Senator Bartlett for this initiative and to encourage the committee to view the bill favourably. I applaud the basic premise of a national approach to animal welfare.

Rather than look at the detail of the bill I would prefer to make more general comments on our treatment of nonhuman animals in the hope that it may influence the committee's deliberations.

It is a common argument from those whose business is based on the use of nonhuman animals that any decisions regarding the welfare of the animals under their control be 'science-based' rather than based on 'emotional arguments' or 'community concerns'.

This adherence to practicality is what has brought about the current obscene situation where sentient creatures have come to be treated as mere production units – machines to provide unnecessary food and fibre, often misleading experimental results and entertainment.

For these reasons I firmly believe that emotion and community concerns should be the **primary basis** on which any decisions regarding the welfare of our fellow creatures are made – not 'science'.

Compassion is described by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the supreme emotion. He has also said, "All sentient beings should be looked on as equal" and "Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive."

It is 'science' that decrees that hens kept three or more to a cage (where they can't stretch their wings, perch or carry out any of their natural behaviours except lay eggs and defecate) is an efficient way to produce eggs. Compassion and community opinion clearly say that this inhumane treatment of chooks is unacceptable.

It is 'science' that causes calves to be removed from their mothers after only a few days so the calf can be locked up to produce veal and the mother's milk can again be extracted

for human consumption as soon as possible. Compassion demands that we recognise that mother-child bonds in these animals are very similar to our own human experience.

It is 'science' that keeps a sow in a stall where she can't reach her babies as they suckle through the bars as, according to the industry, the stall "provides a controlled feeding environment, reduces aggression between sows and delivers superior reproductive performance." Compassion demands that these beings be allowed to form familial bonds and that the sow be allowed to take more than a single step forward or backward.

Such neglect of the interests of nonhumans has now reached the extreme stage where there can be serious consideration of specifically breeding blind chickens as it has been found that these blind animals are more 'efficient' at producing eggs than the 'normal' farm chicken.

I think many Australians would see that the current parliament might benefit from a debate on compassion. The principle of compassion is something that should apply to many debates in our parliaments and to decision processes in our governments. It seems to have been sadly lacking of late. If I may use another quote, "Lack of respect for growing, living things will soon lead to lack of respect for humans too." – Chief Luther Standing Bear - Brulé Sioux author.

I will conclude with yet another quote, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way in which its animals are treated." – Mohandas Gandhi.

I wish the committee well in its deliberations and urge members to use *their* compassion.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike O'Shaughnessy'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail that ends in a small hook.

Mike O'Shaughnessy
29 November 2005