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*Submission on Productivity Commission Report on the Regulation of Agriculture*

Vets Against Live Export (VALE) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on this report. As an organisation which has advocated for improvements in animal welfare in the live export industry whilst transitioning to a chilled meat trade for several years, the Commission's inclusion of specific recommendations to improve animal welfare are strongly supported.

In particular, VALE believes there are many benefits for establishing an Independent Office for Animal Welfare (IOAW) and that this is an urgent priority. The Commission's acknowledgement of the importance and consideration of both scientific evidence and community expectations is essential to improve animal welfare is pleasing. In addition, due to the many and ongoing significant welfare issues relating to the live export industry, an IOAW would help ensure proper and vigorous investigation, swift and appropriate penalties for breaches and increased monitoring to identify non-compliance. This would also help to restore community trust that welfare matters relating to live export are not being referred to authorities which have a conflict of interest.

In addition to coordinating the development of national animal welfare standards and guidelines, there are many animal welfare issues of national concern that require national leadership to achieve greater consistency and collaboration between States. Key issues of importance to the community in addition to live export, include egg labelling, intensive animal production, puppy farms and greyhound racing.

The IOAW could also play a central role in harmonising state based animal welfare legislation especially for the issues described above.

There would be significant benefit gained for the IOAW to also coordinate a national advisory animal welfare committee to increase efficiency and continuity.

To ensure high level expertise of IOAW staff, it is recommended that relevant qualifications and experience in animal welfare are core criteria for staff selection.

VALE also strongly supports the need for independent science and reporting, particularly to prevent industry bias and influence.

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