

1st March 2023

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry - Animal Welfare Branch
Email IGAWLAE@agriculture.gov.au

RE: Inspector-General of Animal Welfare: Consultation Paper

Animal Care Australia (ACA) is a national incorporated association established to consult with government in advocating for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation the implied outline within the consultation paper, that being an Inspector General for Live Exports, stands outside of our purview. However, we have serious concerns relating to this paper and the apparent lack of understanding and knowledge perpetrated by both the government Ministers and Senior Staff as to the exact responsibilities of the position of Inspector General of Animal Welfare & Live Exports. (Point of note: even the title of the Consultation Paper makes no inclusion of ‘Live Export’)

Confusion is further exacerbated by the opening **Purpose** of the Consultation Paper:

*The Australian Government made a commitment to **establish an Inspector-General of Animal Welfare** to strengthen animal welfare and increase accountability and transparency for animal welfare in livestock exports.*

*This will be implemented by expanding the current office of the Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports to include animal welfare related objectives and expertise, **forming an Inspector General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports (IGAWLAE).***

Which is it?

An Inspector General of Animal Welfare OR an Inspector General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports.

This may seem pedantic however the impacts of the two titles have an astronomical difference when determining the purview and responsibilities of the Office in question.

Further implication of potential impacts can be found within the **Context** of the paper:

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening animal welfare and has committed to renew the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS). This is being progressed separately to the establishment of the IGAWLAE.

The specific functions of the IGAWLAE are yet to be finalised and will be informed by your and other stakeholders’ feedback on this consultation paper.

If the functions of IGAWLAE are still to be finalised - will the Inspector General of ANIMAL WELFARE and Live Exports end up overseeing the AAWS?

In response to questions raised by Senator Faruqi, several Labor Ministers stated that the new Inspector General only encompasses Live Exports. In which case, it is Animal Care Australia’s contention

there is no need to change the title from Inspector General of Live Animal Exports, given good animal welfare outcomes SHOULD have always been an objective of the Live Export Industry?

The inclusion of the term Animal Welfare, implies there would now be additional responsibilities outside of Live Animal Exports. Or is it this inclusion without an expansion of the role to sectors outside of Live Animal Exports is political “welfare washing” rather than a genuine goal of improvement to animal welfare? The consultation paper outright says that “Animal Welfare” is a new role. The question is why?

This appears to be the case when reviewing the Objects of the Inspector General of Live Exports Act 2019¹

Objects of this Act

The objects of this Act are:

(a) to promote continual improvements in the regulatory practice, performance and culture of the Department in its role as the regulator of Australia’s live-stock exports; and

(b) to provide an additional layer of accountability and assurance over the regulation of Australia’s live-stock exports; and

(c) to ensure that live-stock export officials, in performing functions and exercising powers, consider the welfare of animals in Australia’s live-stock exports

Part (c) clearly states the Inspector General must consider the welfare of animals. Clearly this is political posturing.

In light of the above Animal Care Australia makes the following recommendations:

- 1) the existing Objectives are be updated to prioritise animal welfare over commercial interests, and**
- 2) Strict Conditions are drafted to ensure the focus remains on animal welfare and does NOT include animal rights or related ideologies.**

Given the Consultation Paper is so not clear about what the new role encompasses, and the questions imply that this is currently open to any and all interpretations, the potential influence the new Inspector General role will have over the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy and National Implementation Plan is also unclear. This is of great concerns to Animal Care Australia, as it would have significant impacts on all animal owners, not just farmers and exporters. The Consultation should have reflected this, and ALL animal stakeholders should have been invited for comment.

Part 1 of The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy states that:

“it encompasses all six (6) animal use sectors”, and “agreement to extend the development of standards and guidelines to non-productions animals”

meaning that if the new role oversees or has over riding powers to influence the AAWS, the role is no longer limited to just Live Exports. In this case it Animal Care Australia strongly recommends greater, and broader public consultation is required BEFORE ANY FURTHER implementation of the new Inspector General is completed

¹

<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22legislation%2Fbillhome%2Fs1224%22>

It should be noted that should the role only encompass Live Exports as proclaimed by the Ministers, then Animal Care Australia would have no concerns with the new Inspector General speaking to the AAWS on behalf of Live Animal Exports.

Animal Care Australia does not support the new role having powers outside of Live Animal Exports as this requires removal of powers from the states, who are currently responsible for Animal Welfare.

In response to particular Consultation Paper questions:

Considerations for establishment of the IGAWLAE objective

“Reviewing/reporting on the Commonwealth’s interaction with state and territory animal welfare agencies”

There is no specification as to what animals or industries this encompasses, This is of concern as the generally recognised definition of ‘livestock’ includes animals also maintained and cared for as pets. Without a clear delineation between these animals AND ONLY THOSE KEPT for the purpose of live export, the door is open for the abuse of power by agencies such as the RSPCA to include any breaches of the associated live export/meat Acts.

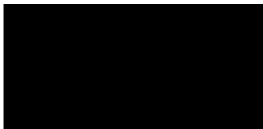
“Structure and inclusion of additional animal welfare expertise”

This also raises great concern for Animal Care Australia as this MUST be focused on Animal Welfare to the exclusion of Animal Rights/Animal Protection. Ethics debates do not belong within legislation. Organisations with objectives, and mission statements that encourage or promote animal rights/protection ideologies MUST be excluded from participating on any consultative panels.

Additionally, what experience, skills and capabilities would be desirable in recruiting animal welfare expertise/staff into the office given the “specific animal welfare related objectives for the IGAWLAE will be determined by this public consultation” will these objectives etc be subjected to further rounds of consultation with industry, stakeholders, etc?

Please do not hesitate to make contact if we can assist further.

Kind regards,



Michael Donnelly
President

