

2 March 2023

Animal Welfare Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT 2601

Att: The Hon. Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Minister,

Proposed Inspector General for Animal Welfare

I make this submission to you in my capacity as an elected member of NSW Parliament representing the Animal Justice Party.

It is well-known how important animal protection is to the Australian public. Yet, right now, Australia lacks any semblance of national leadership on animal protection issues.

As your Department is aware, all forms of Federal leadership on animal protection were disbanded under the former Coalition Government. Upon Labor's return to Government, I was heartened by commitments to restore the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy and establish an Inspector General for Animal Welfare.

I note that during the 2022 Federal election, the Labor Party stated on its website that:

An Albanese Labor Government will provide \$1 million a year to establish the office of the independent Inspector-General for Animal Welfare and increase accountability and transparency for reporting of animal welfare breaches.¹

The Labor Party website also stated that the new Inspector-General would report to Parliament on '*any allegations of breaches of animal welfare standards and investigations undertaken*'.

I was therefore thoroughly disappointed to read the 'Inspector-General of Animal Welfare Consultation Paper' and see that Labor's plan for the new Inspector General for Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports (IGAWLAE) is very limited. As the new position will only slightly expand the current office of the Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports (IGLAE), it appears the Labor Government is seeking to backflip on their election commitment.

The Australian public expects Federal leadership to ensure a strong and nationally consistent approach to animal protection. An Inspector General focused purely on live export falls short

¹ <https://www.alp.org.au/policies/strengthening-animal-welfare>.

of this expectation and the Government's commitments. Furthermore, the Federal Government can no longer ignore international precedent, public attitudes and irrefutable evidence that animal welfare is severely and inherently compromised in live export. The proposed new role will not address these issues, and importantly, is an irresponsible use of the allocated 4 million dollars for establishing an Inspector General.

It is time for the Labor Government to hold true to their election commitments, and use this opportunity to establish a real, independent Federal body for animal protection. In order to eliminate inherent conflicts of interest, animal protection must come under the ambit of a dedicated Animal Protection Minister and/or a National Animal Protection Commission. Such bodies would then be in a position to introduce nationally consistent animal protection standards and decision-making principles; harmonise legislation and enforcement; and, ensure Australian animal protection values are not sacrificed in the name of profit.

The Federal Government must recognise that it's responsibility for animal welfare extends beyond live exports. For example, the Federal Government is constitutionally responsible for national environmental protection legislation, international trade agreements and treaties, quarantine and management strategies for certain species. Federal leadership is also required to guide nationwide reforms in areas of public interest, as already demonstrated by the Federal Government in the case of kangaroo management, and restricting the use of animals in cosmetics testing.

Furthermore, although States and Territories have authority for enacting domestic animal welfare laws, there is a crucial role for the Federal Government in facilitating the development of consistent laws and a cooperative approach to animal protection.

The Federal Government must fund and renew the Animal Welfare Strategy as a matter of priority; take real action in response to the irrefutable evidence that Australia must phase out live exports; and expand the remit of the Inspector General of Animal Welfare beyond live exports.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this matter further. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience to set up a meeting.

Regards,



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Animal Justice Party

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