

What action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?

- It is not appropriate for the department to comment on a complaint that may have been made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

What action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?

- All disclosures made under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (PID Act) are investigated in accordance with legislative requirements. The PID Act provides certain protections to individuals who have made a disclosure under the Act or witnesses who provide assistance in relation to a disclosure made under the Act. As such, the department is not able to comment on matters related to any public interest disclosures.

What action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?

- The safety of departmental employees is, and always has been, of paramount importance to the department. Staff may enter pens where there are appropriate controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

How does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?

- The department rejects the statement made by the Guardian that it is inherently conflicted in performing its regulatory responsibilities at export meat establishments.
- The department has a robust regulatory framework and takes regulatory action, where appropriate, for breaches of animal welfare requirements.

Does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

- The department has been made aware of the recent video footage collected by the Farm Transparency Project alleging poor animal welfare outcomes at one (1) export registered abattoir in Queensland. The department is considering the material from the FTP website and cannot provide comment on an active investigation.

Thanks,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

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OFFICIAL

From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 1:14 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Subject: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi team,

Hope you're well.

I'm working on a piece about the on-plant veterinarian program administered by the agriculture department.

The facts as we currently understand them are as follows:

- the Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.
- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on "profound problems" they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to "chronic understaffing". The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:
 - an external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs

unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. "These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality," the complaint alleges. "It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors."

- a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were "profound problems" with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia's trade. "A culture of 'see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil' will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia's reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere," he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: "After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager's] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM's response was to reply 'I wish you hadn't told me that'. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV." He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. "In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner." The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a "cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal" in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: "I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant's Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly." The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.

- a complaint by a resigning veterinarian last year, in which he warned that OPVs had been left unable to do their job of protecting animal welfare due to rule changes around ante-mortem inspections. His resignation letter said: "The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances, especially with small stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante-mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal

welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV."

- we understand the 2023 PID and the 2019 ombudsman complaint prompted internal investigations. The substance of the 2023 PID was found to be substantiated, but the department said it was not "disclosable conduct", meaning it would not be disclosed to any other agency. It instead dealt with it through internal recommendations. The 2019 Ombudsman complaint also prompted an internal review and the engagement of consultants. It is not clear what the outcome of this review was.
- we have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:
 - they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.
 - Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.
 - staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.
 - some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."
- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

My questions on this are:

- what is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above?
- what is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?
- why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?
- why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?
- why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?
- what action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?
- how does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?
- does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

My deadline for this is Wednesday COB.

Many thanks,

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

The Guardian | Australia

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ag Media
Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 9:47 AM
To: Christopher Knaus; Ag Media
Subject: RE: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Morning Christopher,

Certainly by COB, though I'm hoping for early afternoon. Will keep you posted.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

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From: Christopher Knaus
Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 9:28 AM
To: Ag Media
Subject: Re: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Thanks again for this ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} - do you have a rough ETA today on when something might be ready? Just for my own planning purposes.

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations
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On Mon, 14 Apr 2025 at 09:55, Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Hi Christopher,

Thanks for your email- we're onto it. However, as with past queries, our processes are seriously affected by caretaker and resourcing, so it's unlikely to reach you today. Tomorrow should be fine. We'll keep you posted.

All the best,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

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OFFICIAL

From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 9:40 AM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi team,

Thanks again for your help with the responses. It's been helpful in clarifying a few matters, particularly around the welfare incident reporting process.

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

I understand Agriculture Victoria investigated this matter but took no action against the transporter, other than reminding it of its obligations under the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (LAND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK). Those guidelines require transporters to take reasonable steps to protect livestock from the impact of severe weather.

We have spoken to one OPV who says the incident was "horrific". We've also seen photos of the incident and plan to publish them.

The questions I have are:

- what actions did the department take following this incident?
- was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?
- did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?

My deadline for this is 5pm today.

Thanks again.

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

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On Thu, 3 Apr 2025 at 15:54, Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon Christopher,

Thanks for your patience. The following answers can be attributed to a departmental spokesperson.

The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some

establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

Response: The department rosters OPVs to service industry demand and ensures that it satisfies overseas market access requirements. Regulatory oversight is maintained at establishments as needed. The department has developed its on plant staffing model (both OPVs and Food Safety Meat Assessors) over time and continues to recruit on plant staff as required.

The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

Response: As part of their regulatory role within establishments, OPVs can and do write and submit welfare incident reports that may then be investigated by the regulator responsible (which is usually the relevant state or territory where the abattoir is located).

The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

Response: The Department has a WHS obligation to ensure that all staff have access to a safe working environment, this includes undertaking ante mortem inspection safely. Establishments are required to support departmental staff in undertaking ante mortem inspections while ensuring the delivery of effective animal welfare outcomes without jeopardising staff safety. The WHS controls for ante mortem can be physical (barrier/fencing/walk over) and includes the assistance of an establishment stock handler to assist in the separation of livestock within the pen. The number of stock handlers needs to be sufficient (minimum of one) to address the volume and type of livestock, e.g. cattle or sheep, and the physical layout of the livestock pen.

The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)

- Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

Response: The department has received these complaints and has reviewed in line with its regulatory obligations at export registered establishments.

All the best,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

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From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 3:12 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

That's fine, thanks s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

And just one more question sorry. The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

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On Tue, 1 Apr 2025 at 13:56, Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Hi Chris,

Thank you for sending these through and we're actioning a response for you.

Caretaker conventions, however, have affected our internal processes - impacting our response times - and we're likely to need until Thursday to get this back to you.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

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OFFICIAL

From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:15 AM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thanks again to you and the team for the comprehensive response.

We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1) The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

2) The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and

that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

3) The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

It'd be great to get a response to these follow-up questions by 3pm Wednesday.

Thanks again.

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

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On Mon, 31 Mar 2025 at 17:32, Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com> wrote:

Thanks ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} appreciate it.

Christopher Knaus
Chief investigations correspondent
Guardian Australia
m: 0422283681
e: christopher.knaus@guardian.co.uk

On Mon, 31 Mar 2025, 5:11 pm Ag Media, <Media@aff.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Hi Christopher,

Thank you for your patience. Please see our response below:

What is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above?

- The department rejects the statement made by the Guardian about its integrity in performing its regulatory responsibilities at export meat establishments. The department works cooperatively with State/Territory counterparts to investigate animal welfare complaints in accordance with relevant legislation.
- Export-registered establishments are primarily responsible for identifying and actively managing animal welfare incidents in accordance with the *Australian Meat Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption* (AS4696:2023) and any state/territory legislative requirements.
- The department ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken to address non-compliance with export control legislation.
- Export-registered establishments must also comply with state/territory animal welfare legislation and are required to follow direction given by the department to assist state/territory governments to investigate animal welfare incidents.

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?

- Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?

- This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

Why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?

- All on plant staff are issued with secure departmental devices.
- There is no departmental restriction to using a departmental device to take photos provided every effort is made to comply with privacy legislation.

What action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?

- It is not appropriate for the department to comment on a complaint that may have been made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

What action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?

- All disclosures made under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (PID Act) are investigated in accordance with legislative requirements. The PID Act provides certain protections to individuals who have made a disclosure under the Act or witnesses who provide assistance in relation to a disclosure made under the Act. As such, the department is not able to comment on matters related to any public interest disclosures.

What action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?

- The safety of departmental employees is, and always has been, of paramount importance to the department. Staff may enter pens where there are appropriate controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

How does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?

- The department rejects the statement made by the Guardian that it is inherently conflicted in performing its regulatory responsibilities at export meat establishments.
- The department has a robust regulatory framework and takes regulatory action, where appropriate, for breaches of animal welfare requirements.

Does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

- The department has been made aware of the recent video footage collected by the Farm Transparency Project alleging poor animal welfare outcomes at one (1) export registered abattoir in Queensland. The department is considering the material from the FTP website and cannot provide comment on an active investigation.

Thanks,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 1:14 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Subject: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi team,

Hope you're well.

I'm working on a piece about the on-plant veterinarian program administered by the agriculture department.

The facts as we currently understand them are as follows:

- the Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.
- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on “profound problems” they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to “chronic understaffing”. The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:
 - an external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. “These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality,” the complaint alleges. “It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors.”
 - a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were “profound problems” with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia’s trade. “A culture of ‘see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil’ will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia’s reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere,” he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one

2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: “After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager’s] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM’s response was to reply ‘I wish you hadn’t told me that’. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV.” He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. “In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner.” The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a “cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal” in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: “I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant’s Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly.” The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.

- a complaint by a resigning veterinarian last year, in which he warned that OPVs had been left unable to do their job of protecting animal welfare due to rule changes around ante-mortem inspections. His resignation letter said: "The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances , especially with small stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante- mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV."

- we understand the 2023 PID and the 2019 ombudsman complaint prompted internal investigations. The substance of the 2023 PID was found to be substantiated, but the department said it was not "disclosable conduct", meaning it would not be disclosed to any other agency. It instead dealt with it through internal recommendations .The 2019 Ombudsman complaint also prompted an internal review and the engagement of consultants. It is not clear what the outcome of this review was.

- we have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:

- they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.
- Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.
- staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.
- some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."
- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

My questions on this are:

- what is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above?
- what is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?
- why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?
- why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?
- why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?

- what action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?
- what action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?
- how does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?
- does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

My deadline for this is Wednesday COB.

Many thanks,

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ag Media
Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 4:05 PM
To: Christopher Knaus; Ag Media
Subject: RE: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi Christopher,

Thanks again for your patience. The following can be attributed to a departmental spokesperson.

- This matter was referred by the department to NSW Department of Primary Industries.
 - *That is, the regulatory agency where the incident was detected.*
- The transport of livestock is regulated through State and Territory legislation and implemented by the associated regulatory agency

Thank you.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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From: Christopher Knaus
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 9:40 AM
To: Ag Media
Subject: Re: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi team,

Thanks again for your help with the responses. It's been helpful in clarifying a few matters, particularly around the welfare incident reporting process.

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

I understand Agriculture Victoria investigated this matter but took no action against the transporter, other than reminding it of its obligations under the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (LAND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK). Those guidelines require transporters to take reasonable steps to protect livestock from the impact of severe weather.

We have spoken to one OPV who says the incident was "horrific". We've also seen photos of the incident and plan to publish them.

The questions I have are:

- what actions did the department take following this incident?
- was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?
- did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?

My deadline for this is 5pm today.

Thanks again.

Christopher Knaus
Chief correspondent, investigations
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On Thu, 3 Apr 2025 at 15:54, Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon Christopher,

Thanks for your patience. The following answers can be attributed to a departmental spokesperson.

The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected

in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

Response: The department rosters OPVs to service industry demand and ensures that it satisfies overseas market access requirements. Regulatory oversight is maintained at establishments as needed. The department has developed its on plant staffing model (both OPVs and Food Safety Meat Assessors) over time and continues to recruit on plant staff as required.

The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

Response: As part of their regulatory role within establishments, OPVs can and do write and submit welfare incident reports that may then be investigated by the regulator responsible (which is usually the relevant state or territory where the abattoir is located).

The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

Response: The Department has a WHS obligation to ensure that all staff have access to a safe working environment, this includes undertaking ante mortem inspection safely. Establishments are required to support departmental staff in undertaking ante mortem inspections while ensuring the delivery of effective animal welfare outcomes without jeopardising staff safety. The WHS controls for ante mortem can be physical (barrier/fencing/walk over) and includes the assistance of an establishment stock handler to assist in the separation of livestock within the pen. The number of stock handlers needs to be sufficient (minimum of one) to address the volume and type of livestock, e.g. cattle or sheep, and the physical layout of the livestock pen.

The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)

- Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

Response: The department has received these complaints and has reviewed in line with its regulatory obligations at export registered establishments.

All the best,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

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From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 3:12 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Subject: Re: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

That's fine, thanks s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

And just one more question sorry. The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

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On Tue, 1 Apr 2025 at 13:56, Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Hi Chris,

Thank you for sending these through and we're actioning a response for you.

Caretaker conventions, however, have affected our internal processes - impacting our response times - and we're likely to need until Thursday to get this back to you.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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OFFICIAL

From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:15 AM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Subject: Re: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thanks again to you and the team for the comprehensive response.

We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1) The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant."

- Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?

2) The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

3) The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

It'd be great to get a response to these follow-up questions by 3pm Wednesday.

Thanks again.

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

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On Mon, 31 Mar 2025 at 17:32, Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com> wrote:

Thanks ^{s. 22(1)(a)(iii)} appreciate it.

Christopher Knaus
Chief investigations correspondent
Guardian Australia
m: 0422283681
e: christopher.knaus@guardian.co.uk

On Mon, 31 Mar 2025, 5:11 pm Ag Media, <Media@aff.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Hi Christopher,

Thank you for your patience. Please see our response below:

What is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above?

- The department rejects the statement made by the Guardian about its integrity in performing its regulatory responsibilities at export meat establishments. The department works cooperatively with State/Territory counterparts to investigate animal welfare complaints in accordance with relevant legislation.
- Export-registered establishments are primarily responsible for identifying and actively managing animal welfare incidents in accordance with the *Australian Meat Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption* (AS4696:2023) and any state/territory legislative requirements.
- The department ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken to address non-compliance with export control legislation.
- Export-registered establishments must also comply with state/territory animal welfare legislation and are required to follow direction given by the department to assist state/territory governments to investigate animal welfare incidents.

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?

- Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).

- The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?

- This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

Why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?

- All on plant staff are issued with secure departmental devices.
- There is no departmental restriction to using a departmental device to take photos provided every effort is made to comply with privacy legislation.

What action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?

- It is not appropriate for the department to comment on a complaint that may have been made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

What action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?

- All disclosures made under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (PID Act) are investigated in accordance with legislative requirements. The PID Act provides certain protections to individuals who have made a disclosure under the Act or witnesses who provide assistance in relation to a disclosure made under the Act. As such, the department is not able to comment on matters related to any public interest disclosures.

What action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?

- The safety of departmental employees is, and always has been, of paramount importance to the department. Staff may enter pens where there are appropriate controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

How does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?

- The department rejects the statement made by the Guardian that it is inherently conflicted in performing its regulatory responsibilities at export meat establishments.
- The department has a robust regulatory framework and takes regulatory action, where appropriate, for breaches of animal welfare requirements.

Does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

- The department has been made aware of the recent video footage collected by the Farm Transparency Project alleging poor animal welfare outcomes at one (1) export registered abattoir in Queensland. The department is considering the material from the FTP website and cannot provide comment on an active investigation.

Thanks,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

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OFFICIAL

From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 1:14 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Subject: Query re: on-plant veterinarian program

Hi team,

Hope you're well.

I'm working on a piece about the on-plant veterinarian program administered by the agriculture department.

The facts as we currently understand them are as follows:

- the Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.
- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on “profound problems” they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to “chronic understaffing”. The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:
 - an external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. “These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality,” the complaint alleges. “It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors.”
 - a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were “profound problems” with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia’s trade. “A culture of ‘see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil’ will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia’s reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere,” he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: “After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager’s] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM’s response was to reply ‘I wish you hadn’t told me that’. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV.” He also described

discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. "In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner." The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a "cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal" in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: "I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant's Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly." The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.

- a complaint by a resigning veterinarian last year, in which he warned that OPVs had been left unable to do their job of protecting animal welfare due to rule changes around ante-mortem inspections. His resignation letter said: "The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances, especially with small stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante-mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV."

- we understand the 2023 PID and the 2019 ombudsman complaint prompted internal investigations. The substance of the 2023 PID was found to be substantiated, but the department said it was not "disclosable conduct", meaning it would not be disclosed to any other agency. It instead dealt with it through internal recommendations. The 2019 Ombudsman complaint also prompted an internal review and the engagement of consultants. It is not clear what the outcome of this review was.

- we have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:

- they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.

- Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.
- staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.
- some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."
- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

My questions on this are:

- what is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above?
- what is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?
- why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?
- why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?
- why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?
- what action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?

- how does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?
- does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

My deadline for this is Wednesday COB.

Many thanks,

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

The Guardian | Australia

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christopher.knaus@guardian.co.uk

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ag Media
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 12:33 PM
To: **s. 47F(1)** (DEECA); Ag Media
Subject: RE: OFFICIAL: Re: Dubbo AW Incident Query Update

Hi **s. 47F(1)**

Thanks for this. We've received a similar set of questions from this journo. As for the interview, we have no knowledge of it as best as I can tell.

Happy to discuss.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Communications and Media Branch

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agriculture.gov.au

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From: **s. 47F(1)** (DEECA)
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 12:23 PM
To: Ag Media
Subject: Fw: OFFICIAL: Re: Dubbo AW Incident Query Update

Hi DAFF media team,

Just sharing this with you as an FYI. Wondering if this interview has been approved?

Thanks, **s. 47F(1)**

s. 47F(1)

Communications and Media Advisor | Strategic Communications | Agriculture Victoria

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
2 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, Victoria 3002

M: **s. 47F(1)** | E: **s. 47F(1)** @deeca.vic.gov.au

deeca.vic.gov.au



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OFFICIAL

From: Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>

Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 09:21

To: s. 47F(1) (DEECA)

Subject: Re: OFFICIAL: Re: Dubbo AW Incident Query Update

EXTERNAL SENDER: Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Thanks again for your help on Friday ^{s. 47F(1)} Greatly appreciated.

I'm just wanting to follow-up on the penalty issue. We've spoken to a current OPV from the federal department who has described the incident as "horrific" and one of the worst welfare breaches he has seen during his career. We've got photos from the scene which are pretty shocking. And the guidelines you referred me to appear to place a requirement on transporters to take reasonable steps to minimise the effects of severe weather on livestock during land transport.

Given all that, the follow-up questions are:

- was stronger enforcement action open to Agriculture Victoria? I.e. could it have imposed fines or taken court action? and why was this not pursued, if so?

I'm hoping for a response by 5pm today.

Thanks again.

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations

The Guardian | Australia

+61 (0) 422 283 681

christopher.knaus@guardian.co.uk

twitter: @knausc

On Fri, 11 Apr 2025 at 16:12, Christopher Knaus <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com> wrote:

Thanks very much ^{s. 47F(1)} - and are you aware of whether DPI NSW had it referred to them by the federal agriculture department? And I presume from the statement that there were no penalties for the transport company?

Christopher Knaus

Chief correspondent, investigations
The Guardian | Australia

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twitter: @knausc

On Fri, 11 Apr 2025 at 16:08, **s. 47F(1)** (DEECA) <**s. 47F(1)** @deeca.vic.gov.au> wrote:

Hi Chris,

Response as follows:

Quotes attributable to an Agriculture Victoria spokesperson:

'The matter was investigated and closed, with advice provided to the business involved relating to the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines- Land Transport of Livestock.'

'Agriculture Victoria takes animal welfare very seriously and responds to all allegations received in accordance with the legislation and departmental procedures.'

Background:

- Agriculture Victoria received a referral on 4 May 2022 from NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.
- The incident in question occurred on 19 April 2022 after an adverse weather event involving high rainfall and cold weather that occurred during the transport journey.
- The welfare of livestock in Victoria is protected under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTAA), associated regulations and the Australian Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock. Agriculture Victoria officers enforce this legislation.
- Anyone wishing to make a specific complaint can call Agriculture Victoria on 136 186 or email aw.complaint@agriculture.vic.gov.au

s. 47F(1)

Communications and Media Advisor | Strategic Communications | Agriculture Victoria

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
2 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, Victoria 3002

M: **s. 47F(1)** | **E:** **s. 47F(1)** @deeca.vic.gov.au
deeca.vic.gov.au



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OFFICIAL

From: s. 47F(1) (DEECA) <s. 47F(1) @deeca.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 11 April 2025 14:36
To: christopher.knaus@theguardian.com <christopher.knaus@theguardian.com>
Subject: Dubbo AW Incident Query Update

Hi Chris,

Sorry for the delay. Hope to have something to you by the end of the day.

s. 47F(1)

s. 47F(1)

Communications and Media Advisor | Strategic Communications | Agriculture Victoria

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ag Media
Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 4:05 PM
To: **s. 47F(1)** (DEECA); Ag Media
Subject: RE: OFFICIAL: Re: Dubbo AW Incident Query Update

Hi **s. 47F(1)**

For info, this is what we've shared with the Guardian-

- This matter was referred by the department to NSW Department of Primary Industries.
 - *That is, the regulatory agency where the incident was detected.*
- The transport of livestock is regulated through State and Territory legislation and implemented by the associated regulatory agency

All the best,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

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s. 47F(1)

Communications and Media Advisor | Strategic Communications | Agriculture Victoria

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

2 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, Victoria 3002

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OFFICIAL

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Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 09:21

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^{s. 47F(1)}

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Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:37:35 PM
From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 3:08:57 PM
To: Black, Tom
Cc: Way, Dennis s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: Normal
Sensitivity: None

Hi Tom

FYI – VEMB and MEB are working together on a response.

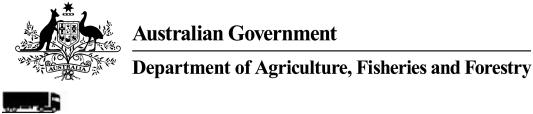
Also just speaking with Dennis, would it be helpful if we were to provide some points ahead of Estimates on Thursday?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 3:01 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au
Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a) – Thanks.

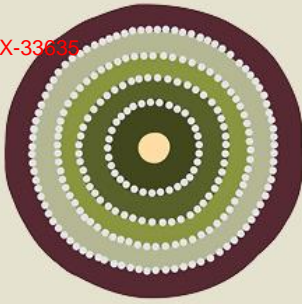
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – Can you work with our MEB colleagues on a combined response.

Regards - Dennis

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:38 PM

To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

The OPV cohort sit within the Veterinary & Export Meat Branch (VEMB) led by Way.Dennis.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) can you please review from a MEB, whole-of-regulatory system perspective.

Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:32 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks for including me s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Happy to assist as relevant, but this enquiry sits primarily with Meat Exports.

Thanks,

Carol LEX-33635

Page 316 of 505

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:10 PM
To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au
Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

We've received a lengthy media inquiry regarding on-plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs (please feel free to redirect if more appropriate).

The **Guardian's chief investigative reporter Christopher Kaus** would like to know:

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- does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

For context, the reporter has provided the below as background to this request:

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- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on "profound problems" they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to "chronic understaffing". The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:
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 - * a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were "profound problems" with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia's trade. "A culture of 'see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil' will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia's reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere," he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: "After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager's] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM's response was to reply 'I wish you hadn't told me that'. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV." He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. "In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner." The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a "cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal" in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: "I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant's Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly." The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.
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resignation letter said: "The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances, especially with small stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante-mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV."

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- we have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:

- * they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.

- Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.

- staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.

- some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."

- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

If you could please have a response to us by 1pm Wednesday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:53:12 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Monday, 24 March 2025 5:02:57 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** FW: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** NoneHi ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

Some comments below for consideration.

Cheers, ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

OFFICIAL

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If you could please have a response to us by 1pm Wednesday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:53:07 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 6:16:40 PM

To: [Lysons-Smith, Shane](#)

Cc: [Way, Dennis](#)

Subject: FW: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 55

Page 321 of 505

Hi Shane

As discussed, can we seek your teams support in providing some responsive lines around the Commonwealth Ombudsman and PID processes which I have highlighted below.

Contacts currently working on this, should your team wish to reach out:

- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – MEB
- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – MEB
- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – VEMB
- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – VEMB

Appreciate your support.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 3:01 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Ls. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Thanks.

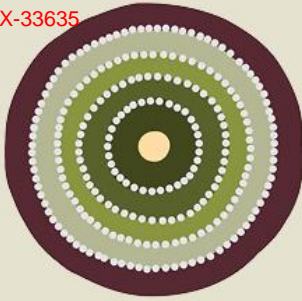
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Can you work with our MEB colleagues on a combined response.

Regards - Dennis

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:38 PM
To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

The OPV cohort sit within the Veterinary & Export Meat Branch (VEMB) led by @Way.Dennis.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) I can you please review from a MEB, whole-of-regulatory system perspective.

Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
 Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:32 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks for including me s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Happy to assist as relevant, but this enquiry sits primarily with Meat Exports.

Carol

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:10 PM
To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>
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- * they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.

- Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.

- staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.

- some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."

- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

If you could please have a response to us by 1pm Wednesday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

S. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:52:56 PM

From: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

To: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

Subject: Fw: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 56

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii) - in confidence please.

s. 47E(d)

We are working with MEB to pull together a response with a short turnaround so would appreciate an early response.

Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 2:50 pm

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi All

Dennis and I will be meeting with TB later this afternoon, will circle back and provide relevant updates post the meeting.

In the meantime, TB is wanting a BPB for this, in preparation for Estimates on Thursday.

Cheers

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary

Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

 **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** |  **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 3:01 PM

To: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>; Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>

Cc: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Thanks.

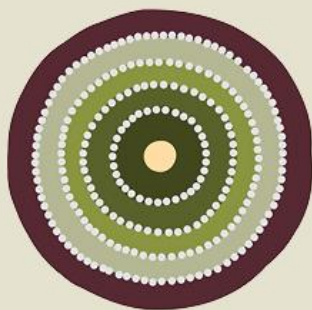
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – Can you work with our MEB colleagues on a combined response.

Regards - Dennis

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:38 PM

To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Es. 22(1)(a)(ii) .gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

The OPV cohort sit within the Veterinary & Export Meat Branch (VEMB) led by @Way.Dennis.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) can you please review from a MEB, whole-of-regulatory system perspective.

Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:32 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks for including me s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Happy to assist as relevant, but this enquiry sits primarily with Meat Exports.

Thanks,

Carol

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:10 PM
To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

We've received a lengthy media inquiry regarding on-plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs (please feel free to redirect if more appropriate).

The **Guardian's chief investigative reporter Christopher Kaus** would like to know:

- what is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above? (SEE BELOW)
- what is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?
- why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?
- why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?
- why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?
- what action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?
- how does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?
- does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

For context, the reporter has provided the below as background to this request:

The facts as we currently understand them are as follows:

- the Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.

Page 328 of 505

- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on "profound problems" they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to "chronic understaffing". The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:

- * an external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. "These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality," the complaint alleges. "It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors."
- * a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were "profound problems" with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia's trade. "A culture of 'see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil' will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia's reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere," he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: "After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager's] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM's response was to reply 'I wish you hadn't told me that'. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV." He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. "In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner." The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a "cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal" in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: "I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant's Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly." The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.
- * a complaint by a resigning veterinarian last year, in which he warned that OPVs had been left unable to do their job of protecting animal welfare due to rule changes around ante-mortem inspections. His resignation letter said: "The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances, especially with small stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante-mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV."

- we understand the 2023 PID and the 2019 ombudsman complaint prompted internal investigations. The substance of the 2023 PID was found to be substantiated, but the department said it was not "disclosable conduct", meaning it would not be disclosed to any other agency. It instead dealt with it through internal recommendations. The 2019 Ombudsman complaint also prompted an internal review and the engagement of consultants. It is not clear what the outcome of this review was.

- we have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:

- * they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.

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- some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."

- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

If you could please have a response to us by 1pm Wednesday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

LEX-33635

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

Page 329 of 505

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:52:49 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**To:** [Way, Dennis](#)**Cc:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None**Attachments:**

Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits LA - Legal comments - CPO comments - media - mw comments - CM comments.docx; ; Query re_ on-plant veterinarian program.msg

Hi Dennis

Please see follow up questions below from the Guardian, not sure how your name has dropped on the list.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestrys. 22(1)(a)(ii) | s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)**Australian Government****Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry****From:** Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>**Cc:** Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au;s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au;
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au;**Subject:** MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

LEX 33835 Page 331 of 505
We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
 - * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
 - * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.
2. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
 - * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
 - * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.
3. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections? 'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:52:44 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 10:20:24 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 58

Page 333 of 505

Team, can you look at this please

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 10:14 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

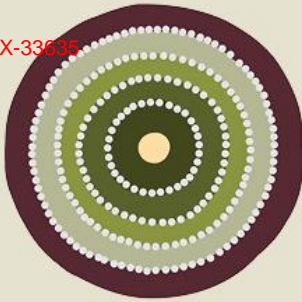
Thanks and will do. I'll leave the animal welfare question to your team.

1. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:14 AM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning Dennis

Can I leave this response with you. s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 6:47 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Further to Dennis and s. 22(1)(a)(ii) commentary, [see blue font](#).

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 1:06 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)
Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)
Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis and s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 47E(d)

Regards s. 22(1)(a)

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:51 AM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)
Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)
Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

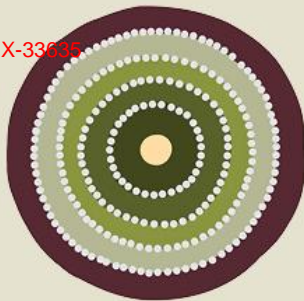
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – can you progress. In general our recruitment/OPV staff no’s have improved since 2019 and the level of constraint for ante mortem can be physical (barrier/fencing/walk over which still enables the visual inspect) plus estab stock handlers to assist in separation within the pen, the no of stockhandlers being sufficient (minimum of one) with volume of livestock and pen layout.

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:53 AM
To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis

Please see follow up questions below from the Guardian, not sure how your name has dropped on the list.

s. 22(1)(c)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
 Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Sanson - Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

Page 337 of 505

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

2. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections? 'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

S. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:34:58 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

Thanks ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} All good. I've accepted your additional sentence below and made only one change (red highlight) to your comments.

Hope this helps.

^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

Hi ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

Thanks. Some comments from me - Not as succinct as I'd hoped, but working on it.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

BSc(hons)BVSc

Senior Veterinary Officer | Veterinary Technical Management Team | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Meat Exports Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 4:33 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

Some comments below for consideration.

Cheers, ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:10 PM

To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

LEX-33635
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)[@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Page 339 of 505

Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

We've received a lengthy media inquiry regarding on-plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs (please feel free to redirect if more appropriate).

The **Guardian's** chief investigative reporter **Christopher Kaus** would like to know:

S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

For context, the reporter has provided the below as background to this request:

The facts as we currently understand them are as follows:

- the Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.

- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on “profound problems” they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to “chronic understaffing”. The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:

- * an external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. “These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality,” the complaint alleges. “It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors.”
- * a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were “profound problems” with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia’s trade. “A culture of ‘see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil’ will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia’s reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere,” he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: “After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager’s] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM’s response was to reply ‘I wish you hadn’t told me that’. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV.” He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. “In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner.” The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a “cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal” in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: “I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant’s Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly.” The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.
- * a complaint by a resigning veterinarian last year, in which he warned that OPVs had been left unable to do their job of protecting animal welfare due to rule changes around ante-mortem inspections. His resignation letter said: “The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances, especially with small

stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante-mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV."

- we understand the 2023 PID and the 2019 ombudsman complaint prompted internal investigations. The substance of the 2023 PID was found to be substantiated, but the department said it was not "disclosable conduct", meaning it would not be disclosed to any other agency. It instead dealt with it through internal recommendations. The 2019 Ombudsman complaint also prompted an internal review and the engagement of consultants. It is not clear what the outcome of this review was.

- we have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:

- * they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.

- Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.

- staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.

- some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."

- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

If you could please have a response to us by 1pm Wednesday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:35:03 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 1:14:29 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

I did update the BPB that was created and you were commenting on. Have you had a chance to review that?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Acting Assistant Secretary s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Security, Integrity and Assurance Branch| People, Property & Security Division
185 O'Riordan Street, Mascot NSW 2020
GPO Box 858, Canberra ACT 2601

agriculture.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 12:45 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

I am working on the responses to the media enquiry around the PID and ombudsman. Just letting you know that we have been granted an extension until Monday morning for the response back to Media.

If you have some pointed responses as per the email below, I will try to get it wrapped up by COB Friday, so we have some clearance time on Monday before the deadline.

Regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

National Business Manager
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Meat Exports Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

daff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 6:39 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Subject: FW: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Can you please work with both MEB and VEMB to respond to the questions around the PID and Ombudsman. I'm assuming our response would reference the strict controls on disclosing the nature of a PID, and the fact that we can't discuss the nature of an investigation conducted by another agency.

Regards,
Shane

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 6:17 PM
To: Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Subject: FW: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Shane

As discussed, can we seek your teams support in providing some responsive lines around the Commonwealth Ombudsman and PID processes which I have highlighted below.

Contacts currently working on this, should your team wish to reach out:

- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – MEB
- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – MEB
- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – VEMB
- s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – VEMB

Appreciate your support.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

■ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 3:01 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Thanks.

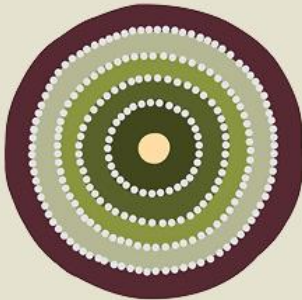
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – Can you work with our MEB colleagues on a combined response.

Regards - Dennis

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:38 PM

To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

The OPV cohort sit within the Veterinary & Export Meat Branch (VEMB) led by Way.Dennis.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) can you please review from a MEB, whole-of-regulatory system perspective.

Thanks

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:32 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks for including me s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Happy to assist as relevant, but this enquiry sits primarily with Meat Exports.

Thanks,

Carol

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:10 PM
To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

We've received a lengthy media inquiry regarding on-plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs (please feel free to redirect if more appropriate).

The **Guardian's chief investigative reporter Christopher Kaus** would like to know:

- what is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above? (SEE BELOW)
- what is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?
- why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?
- why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?
- why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?
- what action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?
- what action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?
- how does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?
- does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

For context, the reporter has provided the below as background to this request:

- the Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.

- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on “profound problems” they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to “chronic understaffing”. The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:

- * **an external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW**. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. “These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality,” the complaint alleges. “It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors.”
- * **a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023**. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were “profound problems” with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia’s trade. “A culture of ‘see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil’ will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia’s reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere,” he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: “After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager’s] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM’s response was to reply ‘I wish you hadn’t told me that’. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV.” He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. “In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner.” The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a “cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal” in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: “I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant’s Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly.” The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.
- * a complaint by a resigning veterinarian last year, in which he warned that OPVs had been left unable to do their job of protecting animal welfare due to rule changes around ante-mortem inspections. His resignation letter said: “The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances, especially with small stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante-mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV.”

- we understand the 2023 PID and the 2019 ombudsman complaint prompted internal investigations. The substance of the 2023 PID was found to be substantiated, but the department said it was not “disclosable conduct”, meaning it would not be disclosed to any other agency. It instead dealt with it through internal recommendations. The 2019 Ombudsman complaint also prompted an internal review and the engagement of consultants. It is not clear what the outcome of this review was.

- we have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:

- * they are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.

- Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.

- staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.

- some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: “Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that’s what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country’s requirements in regards to animal welfare - they’re just minor details. They’ve got to put on a show that they’re satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it’s just window dressing.” Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia’s regulation of the industry, “entire markets will be lost overnight”. “Our animal welfare is one of Australia’s marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost.”

- activist group Farm Transparency Project has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.

If you could please have a response to us by 1pm Wednesday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

S. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:35:09 PM

Document 61

From: ~~s. 22(1)(a)(ii)~~

Page 348 of 505

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [Way, Dennis](#)

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Attachments:

[Short Staffing Plans - Final .docx](#); [Conducting ante-mortem inspections.pdf](#); [Safety Notice 1-2024 Ante Mortem Inspections.pdf](#); ; Safety Notice 1 2024 _ Ante Mortem Inspection. [SEC=OFFICIAL].msg; FW_ Use of electronic devices - evidence that can identify people [SEC=OFFICIAL].msg; FW_ FOR CLEARANCE- MC23-007929 _ PDMS Notification - Record Assigned [SEC=OFFICIAL].msg; [scan_mc0115_2025-03-25-08-00-08.pdf](#); [scan_mc0115_2025-03-25-08-00-49.pdf](#);

Hi Dennis and s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

I have populated the answers below on teams but couldn't upload the attachments

Regards s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:31 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – Thanks.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – Can you work with our MEB colleagues on a combined response.

Regards - Dennis

Dennis Way

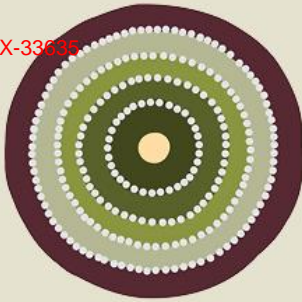
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch

Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

GPO Box 858, Canberra, ACT, 2601



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:38 PM

To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

The OPV cohort sit within the Veterinary & Export Meat Branch (VEMB) led by @Way.Dennis.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) can you please review from a MEB, whole-of-regulatory system perspective.

Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:32 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks for including me s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Happy to assist as relevant, but this enquiry sits primarily with Meat Exports.

Thanks,

Carol LEX-33635

Page 350 of 505

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 March 2025 2:10 PM
To: Sheridan, Carol <Carol.Sheridan@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY: Due 1pm Wednesday - on-plant veterinarian program - The Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

We've received a lengthy media inquiry regarding on-plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs (please feel free to redirect if more appropriate).

The **Guardian's chief investigative reporter Christopher Kaus** would like to know:

- what is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above? (SEE BELOW)
- what is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?
- why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?
- why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?

Staff have the ability to enter pens if the livestock is restrained. A safety notice was sent to all staff in May 2024 which explained this to all on plant staff. (attached). Work Instruction clearly states that on plant staff performing Ante Mortem must do the following

- * not move livestock by themselves
- * ensure that sufficient and competent establishment livestock handlers are available at all times to assist with ante-mortem inspection
- * not enter pens with unrestrained livestock unless it is necessary (and safe) to do so in order to conduct an effective ante-mortem inspection
- * use your professional judgement and not enter a pen with livestock where there is a significant likelihood that you might be injured or have your health compromised

- why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?

On plant staff are all issued with Departmental Mobile Phones. Last advice from Stew to all on plant staff (October 2024) was as follows (see below and attached email)

'Currently, there is no departmental restriction to using the device as long as very effort is made to prevent identifying any individual, or for videos, ensuring no human voice pickup'. If the establishment restricts use of departmentally collected video for capturing and building animal welfare cases (a regrettable situation), that is a separate argument; establishment rights are observed and should be captured as comment in the AWIR (during OPV review) in order to prevent queries raised later by state/NT jurisdictions during their investigation'.

[Use of electronic devices by authorised officers at export registered establishments - DAFF](#) this is currently on Elmer 3

- what action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?

For noting COVID travel restrictions came into place in early 2020

- what action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?

I have attached an email that was sent to ex OPV David Plumbs lawyers (PDMS notification), lawyers letter to the then Senator Murray Watt and signed response letter from Dennis

- what action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?
- how does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?
- does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

For context, the reporter has provided the below as background to this request:

The facts as we currently understand them are as follows:

- the Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.

LEX-33635

Page 351 of 505

- multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on “profound problems” they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to “chronic understaffing”. The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:

- * an external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. “These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality,” the complaint alleges. “It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors.”
- * a public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were “profound problems” with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia’s trade. “A culture of ‘see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil’ will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia’s reputation in agriculture will plummet and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere,” he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally-run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: “After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager’s] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM’s response was to reply ‘I wish you hadn’t told me that’. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV.” He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. “In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner.” The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a “cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal” in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: “I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant’s Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly.” The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly, and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.
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If you could please have a response to us by 1pm Wednesday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

Archived: Monday, 12 May 2025 4:37:45 PM

From: [Way, Dennis](#)

Sent: Thursday, 27 March 2025 9:53:09 AM

To: [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

Subject: FW: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 62

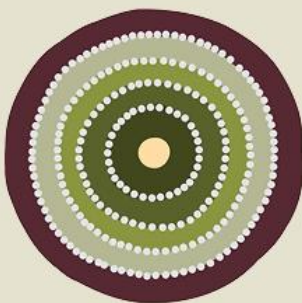
Page 353 of 505

fyi

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile [s. 47F\(1\)](#)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

From: [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 10:48 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) @aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

Thank you for seeking an extension and acknowledge the renewed timeline of tomorrow.

Quick update on the back of this, since we will not be providing a response prior to estimates, we will hold back with the BPB.

The responses against each of the questions, for the most part, are now finalised. There is still a few updates which I have left comments within. [20250324 - Media Request - OPVs and AW.docx](#)

[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)](#) if you are able to start lifting this up into appropriate media language/statement, it would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again

[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)](#)

[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 4:53 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>
Subject: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference

OFFICIAL

Greetings **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** and team,

I just wanted to check in on the media response to this enquiry and – many apologies - to let you know that we'll need to shift the deadline to lunchtime Thursday, due to the need for legal and further FAS and Dep Sec clearances required for this.

I can see that the shared response document has been further populated – I'm not sure if you have more content to come before then?

If you are able to get this to the media team by noon Thursday, we can review and then begin these further clearances.

Thank you for all your work on this and please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Communications and Media Branch
P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 25 March 2025 12:56 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Previous media q and response for reference

OFFICIAL

Hi all,

I just wanted to confirm that I've contacted the journalist and he's agreed to a later deadline of Monday COB (so we'd need to have a response ready to go up to the MO for final clearance by approx 2pm Monday).

Please let me know if you have any issues or concerns and thank you.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Communications and Media Branch

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Archived: Monday, 12 May 2025 4:38:01 PM

From: [W. Dennis](#)

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: Re: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 63

Page 358 of 505

Thanks for the update might have missed the comment with version control to the media team.

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:09 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis

Comments provided to s. 22(1)(a)(ii) are below.



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) left a comment

s. 47E(d)



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) replied

s. 47E(d)

Regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 27 March 2025 4:03 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL

Did we have an answer to the question.

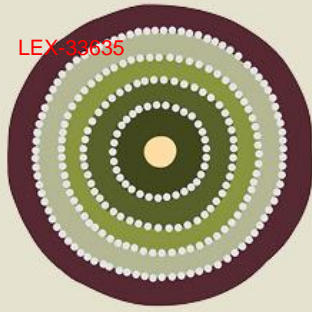
What action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year? 'a0

xxx

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 27 March 2025 4:52 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)

Thank you for sending this through and for turning it around so quickly.

The media team has reviewed the response and has made suggestions in tracked changes.

We've opted to go for direct answers in lieu of a statement as given the specific and detailed questions and background material we believe that this response would be better served by direct answers.

If you could please review and add in any changes and additional material and then get this back to us, we can send it on for further clearance by Shane and Jadd, before getting it back to you for clearance.

If you could have this back to us by 1230pm Friday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 10:48 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thank you for seeking an extension and acknowledge the renewed timeline of tomorrow.

LEX-33635

Page 361 of 505

Quick update on the back of this, since we will not be providing a response prior to estimates, we will hold back with the BPB.

The responses against each of the questions, for the most part, are now finalised. There is still a few updates which I have left comments within. [20250324 - Media Request - OPVs and AW.docx](#)

s. 22(1)(a) if you are able to start lifting this up into appropriate media language/statement, it would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again

s. 22(1)(a)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 4:53 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au); Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)

Subject: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference

OFFICIAL

Greetings s. 22(1)(a)(ii) and team,

I just wanted to check in on the media response to this enquiry and – many apologies - to let you know that we'll need to shift the deadline to lunchtime Thursday, due to the need for legal and further FAS and Dep Sec clearances required for this.

I can see that the shared response document has been further populated – I'm not sure if you have more content to come before then?

If you are able to get this to the media team by noon Thursday, we can review and then begin these further clearances.

Thank you for all your work on this and please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 25 March 2025 12:56 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au); Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd

<Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au

Subject: RE: Previous media q and response for reference

Page 362 of 505

OFFICIAL

Hi all,

I just wanted to confirm that I've contacted the journalist and he's agreed to a later deadline of Monday COB (so we'd need to have a response ready to go up to the MO for final clearance by approx 2pm Monday).

Please let me know if you have any issues or concerns and thank you.

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 22/04 11:09 am

https://deptagriculture.sharepoint.com/sites/PT_ExportKnowledgeHub/SitePages/DissolutionRegStewardshipBranch.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=ffofd8&clickparams=eyJiWC1BcHBOYW11IiA6IjNANWYb3NvZnQgT3V0bG9vayIsIjYJLUFwcFZlcnNpb24iIDogIjE2LjAuMTg1MjYuMjAyNjQjLCAiI1MilDogIldpbmRvd3MilH0%3d&CID=abcc96a1-b0b3-5000-2447-aaa56ab4b971&cidOR=SPO

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 22/04 11:17 am

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/apr/19/shocking-animal-cruelty-claims-as-vets-blow-whistle-on-export-abattoirs-ntwnfb>

Shocking animal cruelty claims as vets blow whistle on export abattoirs | Australia news | The Guardian

On-plant vets are an international trade requirement - but dozens have now spoken out about what they claim is Australia's lax oversight of the export meat industry

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/apr/20/labor-promises-to-consider-improvements-to-animal-welfare-body-after-shocking-abattoir-revelations-ntwnfb>

Labor vows to consider strengthening Australia's animal welfare body after shocking abattoir revelations | Live exports | The Guardian

Exclusive: Guardian Australia investigation into export abattoirs brings 'necessary and commonsense' commitment back to the spotlight



Shocking animal cruelty claims as vets blow whistle

On-plant vets are an international trade requirement - but dozens have now spoken out about what they claim is...

www.theguardian.com



22/04 11:18 am Edited

[Vets exposing shocking animal welfare breaches at Australian export abattoirs face 'enormous risk' | Animal welfare | The Guardian](#)



Vets exposing shocking animal welfare bre... ✕

Lawyers urge government to protect veterinarian
whistleblowers who monitor animal welfare and food safe...

www.theguardian.com



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) added s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

to the chat.



24/03 3:30 pm Call started



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) added s. 22(1)(a)(ii) to the chat.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 24/03 3:39 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sitting on a plane so will just listen 😊



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) added s. 22(1)(a)(ii) to the chat.



24/03 3:55 pm Call ended 37m 37s

Tuesday, 25 March



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) added s. 22(1)(a)(ii) to the chat.




s. 22(1)(a)(ii) changed the group name to Media - OPVs and AW.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 25/03 9:09 am

Morning all - I have pulled this request into a word doc. Media and integrity will also be providing input so better we work from a single doc [20250324 - Media Request - OPVs and AW.docx](#)



20250324 - Media Request - OPVs a...  ...

personal > matthew_campbell_aff_gov_au



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) added Way, Dennis to the chat and shared chat history from the past day.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 25/03 9:09 am

appreciate if you can work from this document please



LEX-33635

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

appreciate if you can work from this document please

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

25/03 9:15 am

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 47E(d)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

25/03 9:33 am

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

- I have answered a couple of questions but I will send you an email with all the attachments

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

25/03 10:54 am

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

hi all - i have answered a few more questions.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

25/03 11:53 am Edited

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

just finished up with media, legal and integrity

- Media will request extension
- EVSD - finalise input against each question
- EVSD - draft opening response, we operate in accordance with ECA.....
 - Legal to support
- Integrity - include words to use re ombudsman and PID
- Media - will review our detailed response and lift up to a shorter statement
- MEB - to share BPB for all to contribute

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

25/03 1:01 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Link for BPB [BPB-MEB 0X RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE GUARDIAN.docx](#) - thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

25/03 1:01 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Link for BPB [BPB-MEB 0X RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE GUARDIAN.docx](#) - thanks s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

BPB-MEB 0X RESPONSES TO QUEST...



DAFF-MEBLeadership > General

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

25/03 3:48 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Extension on media inquiry until 10am Monday

Wednesday, 26 March

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

26/03 12:15 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Hi all, was there any further input into the inquiry or are you all done? Once you have completed I will review and ask media to make a start

also, TB has confirmed no BPB now that we will respond post estimates



Way, Dennis 26/03 12:23 pm



DW

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) - Can you confirm we've completed our input - Thanks - Dennis

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

26/03 12:28 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

We are all good. I am speaking with s. 22(1)(a)(ii) now to finalise our response

Way, Dennis 26/03 12:30 pm


DW

OK - Thanks. See if any of the attachments you sent s. 22(1)(a)(ii) and I are useful for inclusion for internal

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DW

OK - Thanks. See if any of the attachments you sent  and I are useful for inclusion for internal awareness, i.e. the safety notice

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 26/03 4:39 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

FYI media have just moved the deadline to midday tomorrow

Way, Dennis 26/03 4:43 pm

DW

Our media or the journo?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 26/03 4:45 pm

our strong corp centre

im about to email TB

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 26/03 4:46 pm

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

It's almost there. Still some unanswered questions though. I am out all morning with wild game. So not available until midday.

Thursday, 27 March

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 27/03 10:14 pm

updates from media and further amendments from me, appreciate if you can have another look please [Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits.docx](#) we have till midday Friday



Guardian Q's Draft response - medi...



DAFF-MEBLeadership > General



Guardian Q's Draft response - medi...



DAFF-MEBLeadership > General

From Media

The media team has reviewed the response and has made suggestions in tracked changes. We've opted to go for direct answers in lieu of a statement as given the specific and detailed questions and background material we believe that this response would be better served by direct answers.

Friday, 28 March

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 28/03 9:05 am

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 28/03 9:26 am

s. 47E(d)



s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 28/03 9:39 am

Thanks Andrew - we will need you to put a response of some kind in, we can't just ignore the question. I'll leave it with you



working in pens a result of the comment made in the letter?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 28/03 9:26 am

There was no action taken in response to the casual OPV declining to renew his contract. The safety notice and WI reminders were issued independently following several incidents involving staff entering pens and being struck by animals.



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 28/03 9:39 am

Thanks - we will need you to put a response of some kind in, we can't just ignore the question. I'll leave it with you



Way, Dennis 28/03 10:32 am



I don't think is ignoring the question - I've copied and paste his comment as a response to the item. Effectively the casual OPV decided not to renew their contract. Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 28/03 10:48 am

Poor choice of words on my part and trying to multi-task, not implying anyone was ignoring purposefully - we just need to address all



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 28/03 12:06 pm

Thanks all - have responded to media now



2

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:36 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 4:15:45 PM**To:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#) [Way, Dennis](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Cc:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

Hi Christine

s. 47E(d)

Regards ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:28 PM**To:** Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cc: Foster, Tom <Tom.Foster@aff.gov.au>**Subject:** FW: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi All

I have had a crack at rewording our answers. I think we are providing a bit too much technical information for a non-technical audience.

Can you all please review my re-drafted responses in blue and provide any comments by 5pm please

Christine

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <[Media@aff.gov.au](#)>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM**To:** Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <[Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au](#)>; Simpson, Tim <[Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au](#)>; Mulhearn, Christine <[Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au](#)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Cc:** Wellington, Michelle <[Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au](#)>; Way, Dennis <[Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au](#)>; Ag Media <[Media@aff.gov.au](#)>

Subject: FOR CLEARANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon Jadd, Tim and Christine,

Hoping to have the following cleared by each of you in time to meet our deadline tomorrow. At the moment Q2 is unanswered- will send that through as soon as it's provided. Could we have your feedback on the rest by COB please?

S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

I have attached our response returned in response to this reporter's initial questions and his initial enquiry (which contains further background).

Please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:39 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 4:42:58 PM**To:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [Way, Dennis](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

Thanks Christine – all good with me.

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:37 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Campbell, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

I've had another crack

What do people think?

1. 1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

s. 47E(d)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 4:32 PM**To:** Mulhearn, Christine <[Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au](#)>

Subject: RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Possible amendment below in Green.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 4:16 PM

To: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Christine

s. 47E(d)

Regards s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:28 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

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Christine

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

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Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM
To: Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au
Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: FOR CLEARANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

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s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

I have attached our response returned in response to this reporter's initial questions and his initial enquiry (which contains further background).

Please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.



OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:43 PM

From: ~~s. 22(1)(a)(ii)~~

To: [Way, Dennis](#) ~~s. 22(1)(a)(ii)~~

Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 73

Page 381 of 505

I agree it looks ok

I still have a concern with the following comment- - ~~s. 47E(d)~~

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:23 PM

To: ~~s. 22(1)(a)(ii)~~ @aff.gov.au; ~~s. 22(1)(a)(ii)~~ @aff.gov.au

Subject: FW: FOR CLEARANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

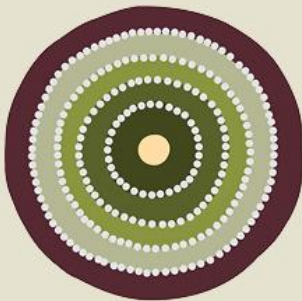
OFFICIAL

FYI – looked OK to me

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile ~~s. 47F(1)~~

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

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To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Sanson - Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; ~~s. 22(1)(a)(ii)~~ @aff.gov.au

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi team,

I think these need a fair bit of finessing. Ill do some crafting and come back to everyone. Tim and Jadd please wait until I recraft for your review.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM

To: Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Subject: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon Jadd, Tim and Christine,

Hoping to have the following cleared by each of you in time to meet our deadline tomorrow. At the moment Q2 is unanswered- will send that through as soon as it's provided. Could we have your feedback on the rest by COB please?

s. 47E(d)

I have attached our response returned in response to this reporter's initial questions and his initial enquiry (which contains further background).

Please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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s. 42(1), s. 47F(1)

s. 42(1),s. 47F(1)

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100**From:** Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 7:01 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Sanson - Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Subject: RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100

Hi All,

I have redrafted the responses for review. The new responses are in blue.

Christine

Hoping to have the following cleared by each of you in time to meet our deadline tomorrow. At the moment Q2 is unanswered- will send that through as soon as it's provided. Could we have your feedback on the rest by COB please?

S. 47E(d)

s. 42(1),s. 47E(d)

S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

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\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100**From:** Mulhearn, Christine

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:28 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi team,

I think these need a fair bit of finessing. Ill do some crafting and come back to everyone. Tim and Jadd please wait until I recraft for your review.

Christine

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM

To: Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Subject: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.au

www.agriculture.gov.au



\qc\ri100\sb160OFFICIAL

\sb100

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:37:05 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:33:15 PM

To: [Mulhearn, Christine](#)

Subject: RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Hey, my edits to yours are in **green** below, provides various slight nuance. Unwind them if you don't agree, they aren't hugely material.

Changed the phrase from "welfare complaint" to "welfare incident report" and slightly added to the OPVs/WHS line to emphasise this does not impact animal welfare outcomes.

Slightly changed wording about FTP reports.

Cheers,
TF

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:04 PM

To: Foster, Tom <Tom.Foster@aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL

Can you check this for me

Red is the original supplied by EVSD – blue is my reworked version

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <[Media@aff.gov.au](#)>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM

To: Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <[Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au](#)>; Simpson, Tim <[Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au](#)>; Mulhearn, Christine <[Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au](#)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <[Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au](#)>; Way, Dennis <[Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au](#)>; Ag Media <[Media@aff.gov.au](#)>

Subject: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.au

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LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:51:54 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 4:31:52 PM**To:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#)**Subject:** RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

Possible amendment below in Green.

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 4:16 PM**To:** Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Subject:** RE: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Christine

I am happy with the responses but do we need to clarify, in a little more detail, the OPV presence. We always endeavour to provide an OPV but there are times (very rare) that we don't due to circumstances outside of our control and we implement our short staffing policy, which ensures that we always have regulatory presence (which may mean we only have an FSMA) on plant which enables us to meet our market access requirements.

Regards s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:28 PM**To:** Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Subject:** FW: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi All

I have had a crack at rewording our answers. I think we are providing a bit too much technical information for a non-technical audience.

Can you all please review my re-drafted responses in blue and provide any comments by 5pm please

LEX 33635

Page 394 of 505

Christine

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From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM
To: Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: FOR CLEARANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

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s. 47E(d)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



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Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:52:17 PM**From:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#)**Sent:** Wed, 2 Apr 2025 04:03:55**To:** [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)**Subject:** FW: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None**Attachments:**[Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits LA - Legal comments - CPO comments - media - mw comments - CM comments.docx](#); ; Query re_ on-plant veterinarian program.msg

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Can you check this for me

Red is the original supplied by EVSD – blue is my reworked version

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From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM**To:** Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) @aff.gov.au**Cc:** Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>**Subject:** FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

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1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:52:40 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 4:01:47 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** FW: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

FYI – please do not distribute 😊

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:58 PM**To:** Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Subject:** FW: FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

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Can you all please review my re-drafted responses in blue and provide any comments by 5pm please

Christine

OFFICIAL

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From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:10 PM**To:** Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Cc:** Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>**Subject:** FOR CLEAREANCE- Response to the Guardian DUE COB - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

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S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



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Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:32:16 PM
From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 28 March 2025 10:32:15 AM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) mentioned you in "Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits".
Importance: Normal
Sensitivity: None
Attachments:

92a1efc8-bca9-4299-bd3a-a2c24375da11; fc183cd3-1349-43d3-bc76-6b3ff7bb9b87; abf664f1-4f4c-4da6-94ab-c4bd06aaea01; 320385f9-f7c8-4e7f-9e37-e6fb78d70002; 6284f1e1-89ae-4e02-af21-874534ad328a;



Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits.docx



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) mentioned you

s. 22(1)(a)(ii), s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

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Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:32:10 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Thu, 27 Mar 2025 23:19:46

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) mentioned you in "Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits".

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Attachments:

0e12023e-f2d6-4de4-a340-db497628d44e; 0213928a-99a6-4f0f-9f75-0fa71d548119; e1650d2c-b118-4658-ab1e-7472437cbce5; 7fe56943-ad80-4fl a-8d5d-e36c28282e2e; e2cb5fl 5-b084-40cf-a32c-5de0a4b95665; e0c459ca-7800-412a-9133-37ea79de4b64;



Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits.docx



You left a comment

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

can you review this please

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) mentioned you

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) I have amended this section. s. 22(1)(a)(ii) is there anything additional required here?

S. 47E(d)

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OFFICIAL: Sensitive

S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d), s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 47E(d)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s. 47E(d), s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

S. 47E(d)

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:37:42 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Monday, 31 March 2025 10:42:16 AM**To:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#)**Subject:** FW: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY - Due COB today - OPV program [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None**Attachments:**[Guardian Q's Draft response - media edits LA - Legal comments - CPO comments.docx;](#)

Hi Boss

For your review – I asked that the approval process to include your when Media send it up.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
 Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) |  s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)

**Australian Government****Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry****From:** Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Friday, 28 March 2025 6:08 PM**To:** Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>**Cc:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au;

Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY - Due COB today - OPV program [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]**OFFICIAL**

Hi all

Please see attached with suggested edits to the responses related to the employee's complaint, PID and Ombudsman.

Happy to discuss if any concerns

Regards,

Shane

s. 42(1)

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Friday, 28 March 2025 1:11 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY - Due COB today - OPV program

OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a)(ii), s. 42(1)

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards.
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Communications and Media Branch
P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 28 March 2025 12:36 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>;
Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd
<Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference
[SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL

Hi Team

Updated version attached, appreciate if you can include Tom Black in the approval process.

Thanks and any questions reach out.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 27 March 2025 4:52 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thank you for sending this through and for turning it around so quickly.

The media team has reviewed the response and has made suggestions in tracked changes.

We've opted to go for direct answers in lieu of a statement as given the specific and detailed questions and background material we believe that this response would be better served by direct answers.

If you could please review and add in any changes and additional material and then get this back to us, we can send it on for further clearance by Shane and Jadd, before getting it back to you for clearance.

If you could have this back to us by 1230pm Friday, that would be much appreciated.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL


From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 10:48 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thank you for seeking an extension and acknowledge the renewed timeline of tomorrow.

Quick update on the back of this, since we will not be providing a response prior to estimates, we will hold back with the BPB.

The responses against each of the questions, for the most part, are now finalised. There is still a few updates which I have left comments within.  [20250324 - Media Request - OPVs and AW.docx](#)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) if you are able to start lifting this up into appropriate media language/statement, it would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

 **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** |  **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** | @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 4:53 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au

Subject: UPDATED GUARDIAN MEDIA ENQUIRY DEADLINE: Previous media q and response for reference

OFFICIAL

Greetings **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** and team,

I just wanted to check in on the media response to this enquiry and – many apologies - to let you know that we'll need to shift the deadline to lunchtime Thursday, due to the need for legal and further FAS and Dep Sec clearances required for this.

I can see that the shared response document has been further populated – I'm not sure if you have more content to come before then?

If you are able to get this to the media team by noon Thursday, we can review and then begin these further clearances.

Thank you for all your work on this and please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 25 March 2025 12:56 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: RE: Previous media q and response for reference

OFFICIAL

Hi all,

I just wanted to confirm that I've contacted the journalist and he's agreed to a later deadline of Monday COB (so we'd need to have a response ready to go up to the MO for final clearance by approx 2pm Monday).

Please let me know if you have any issues or concerns and thank you.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Text Message • SMS
Sat, 26 Apr at 4:03 pm

Tap to Load Preview

theguardian.com >

Do you know anything about this?

I hope you are enjoying your holidays. Regards s. 47F(1)

Sat, 26 Apr at 6:54 pm

Hi s. 47F(1) yes I saw that article. Not very good reporting in my opinion. I'm enjoying the break thanks



Tue, 29 Apr at 4:57 pm

01401550404 " I N

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:52:35 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Monday, 14 April 2025 3:08:25 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Cc:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** FW: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Could you please check if there was any entry for this as an AWIR on our database. 😊

Thanks, s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:06 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>**Subject:** FW: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi team

Can you advise if we have any information on the below.

Note the request for responses **COB today**.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary

Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <JFY-33685-Media@aff.gov.au>

Page 423 of 505

Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 10:33 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We have another follow-up from the Guardian for their OVP piece. I'm including the majority of the message for context- the questions themselves are in bold.

I'm assuming that first responses will fall to s. 22(1)(a)(ii) and Christine, with Tim and Jadd checking afterwards? We're hoping to have a response ready for Dep Sec clearance by COB to meet the journalist's deadline. Please let us know if you have any queries or concerns.

MEDIA INQUIRY

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

I understand Agriculture Victoria investigated this matter but took no action against the transporter, other than reminding it of its obligations under the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (LAND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK). Those guidelines require transporters to take reasonable steps to protect livestock from the impact of severe weather.

We have spoken to one OPV who says the incident was "horrific". We've also seen photos of the incident and plan to publish them.

The questions I have are:

- what actions did the department take following this incident?
- was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?
- did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:16 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:19:23 AM

To: Ag Media Simpson, Tim Sanson -Fisher, Jadd Way, Dennis

Cc: Sanson -Fisher, Jadd Wellington, Michelle s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Curran, Carmel s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Mulhearn, Christine Black, Tom

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Lysons-Smith, Shane s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Morning all

s. 47E(d)

Regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 4:40 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Simpson, Tim
<Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Curran, Carmel
<Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Mulhearn, Christine

<Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane

<Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 3:17 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Simpson, Tim

<Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Curran,

Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Mulhearn, Christine

<Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>;

Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon all,

In addition to below, the Guardian have added another question:

The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- * Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- * Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- * MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- * Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- * Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.au

www.agriculture.gov.au



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. 1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

2. 2. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been

identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

3. 3. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections? 'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:37:12 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Monday, 14 April 2025 3:27:50 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Cc:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

Agreed ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} – s. 47E(d)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Monday, 14 April 2025 3:21 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Subject:** RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}
Hi

s. 47E(d)

Please let me know if you need anything else

Regards

^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) BVSc

Area Technical Manager

Exports Division | Export Meat program

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Phone: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Monday, 14 April 2025 3:16 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Subject:** RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

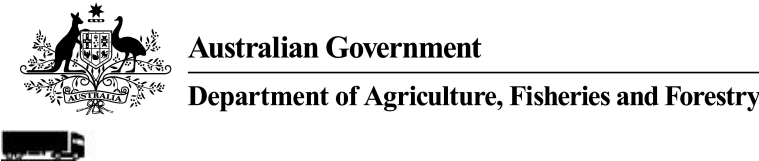
OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:11 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii),
Please find attached the AWIR which was raised for this incident.

Regards
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) BVSc
Area Technical Manager
Exports Division | Export Meat program
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Phone: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:08 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: FW: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Could you please check if there was any entry for this as an AWIR on our database. ☺

Thanks, s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:06 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Subject: FW: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi team

Can you advise if we have any information on the below.

Note the request for responses **COB today**.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 10:33 AM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia

Good morning all,

We have another follow-up from the Guardian for their OVP piece. I'm including the majority of the message for context- the questions themselves are in bold.

I'm assuming that first responses will fall to [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) and Christine, with Tim and Jadd checking afterwards? We're hoping to have a response ready for Dep Sec clearance by COB to meet the journalist's deadline. Please let us know if you have any queries or concerns.

MEDIA INQUIRY

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

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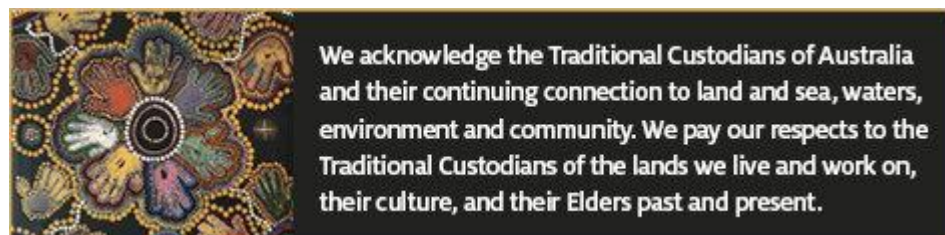
We have spoken to one OPV who says the incident was "horrific". We've also seen photos of the incident and plan to publish them.

The questions I have are:

- what actions did the department take following this incident?**
- was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?**
- did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?**

[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:11 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 6:47:10 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cc: Way, Dennis s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 87

Page 434 of 505

Further to Dennis and s. 22(1)(a)(ii) commentary, see blue font.

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 1:06 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis and s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 47E(d),s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Regards s. 22(1)(a)

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:51 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

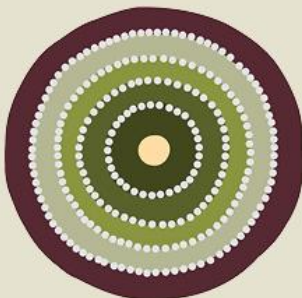
OFFICIAL

s. 22(1)(a) – Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – can you progress. s. 47E(d)

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:53 AM
To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis

Please see follow up questions below from the Guardian, not sure how your name has dropped on the list.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Sanson - Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

2. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

3. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections? 'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Sensitivity: None

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) |  s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 10:33 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We have another follow-up from the Guardian for their OVP piece. I'm including the majority of the message for context- the questions themselves are in bold.

I'm assuming that first responses will fall to s. 22(1)(a)(ii) and Christine, with Tim and Jadd checking afterwards? We're hoping to have a response ready for Dep Sec clearance by COB to meet the journalist's deadline. Please let us know if you have any queries or concerns.

MEDIA INQUIRY

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

I understand Agriculture Victoria investigated this matter but took no action against the transporter, other than reminding it of its obligations under the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (LAND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK). Those guidelines require transporters to take reasonable steps to protect livestock from the impact of severe weather.

We have spoken to one OPV who says the incident was "horrific". We've also seen photos of the incident and plan to publish them.

The questions I have are:

- what actions did the department take following this incident?
- was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?
- did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:37:19 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Sent:** Monday, 14 April 2025 3:54:12 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**Subject:** RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** NoneThanks ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} 😊**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Monday, 14 April 2025 3:50 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Subject:** RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi team,

Confirming was sent to NSW DPI on Friday, 29 April 2022 (original email sent by the OPV attached). The AWIR was company initiated.

I requested the outcome for this report as a part of an initiative in late 2022 to try and collect the investigation outcomes from the states. AgVic confirmed on 31 January 2023 that it had been forwarded to them (assuming by NSW DPI) on 04 May 2022, investigated, and an advisory letter issued as the outcome. Please see the email attached.

There may be evidence in past AWF minutes regarding having the states take responsibility for AWIR referrals due to the issue of cross-jurisdictional legislative overlap.

I hope this helps.

Kind regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

BSc(hons)BVSc

Senior Veterinary Officer | Veterinary Technical Management Team | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Meat Exports Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Monday, 14 April 2025 2:58 PM**To:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

EX 33635
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Page 442 of 505

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia
[SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Agreed ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} – s. 47E(d)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:21 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia
[SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

s. 47E(d)

Please let me know if you need anything else

Regards

^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) BVSc
Area Technical Manager
Exports Division | Export Meat program
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Phone: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:16 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia
[SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} Can we confirm if the matter was referred by us to AgVic? The report stops short of any referral.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:11 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii),
Please find attached the AWIR which was raised for this incident.

Regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) BVSc
Area Technical Manager
Exports Division | Export Meat program
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Phone: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:08 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: FW: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Could you please check if there was any entry for this as an AWIR on our database. 😊

Thanks, s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:06 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Subject: FW: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi team

Can you advise if we have any information on the below.

Note the request for responses **COB today**.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 10:33 AM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s@aff.gov.au>
Subject: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We have another follow-up from the Guardian for their OVP piece. I'm including the majority of the message for context- the questions themselves are in bold.

I'm assuming that first responses will fall to **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** and Christine, with Tim and Jadd checking afterwards? We're hoping to have a response ready for Dep Sec clearance by COB to meet the journalist's deadline. Please let us know if you have any queries or concerns.

MEDIA INQUIRY

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

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The questions I have are:

- **what actions did the department take following this incident?**
- **was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?**
- **did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?**

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



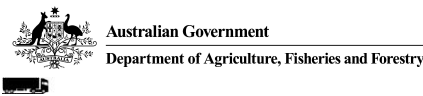
OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:37:31 PM
 From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
 Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:44:14 PM
 To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
 Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]
 Importance: Normal
 Sensitivity: None

Thanks s. 22(1)(

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
 Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
 Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:43 PM
 To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
 Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(

This was before my time in this tole, but below is the information Fi was able to find in NVTM Animal welfare incident report tracker, for your information.

I will leave it for those who were involved in the response to comment on the questions by the Guardian, s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d),s. 47B(a)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
 Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 3:06 PM
 To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
 Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
 Subject: FW: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi team
 Can you advise if we have any information on the below.
 Note the request for responses COB today.

s. 22(1)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
 Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 10:33 AM
To: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

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I'm assuming that first responses will fall to **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** and Christine, with Tim and Jadd checking afterwards? We're hoping to have a response ready for Dep Sec clearance by COB to meet the journalist's deadline. Please let us know if you have any queries or concerns.

MEDIA INQUIRY

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

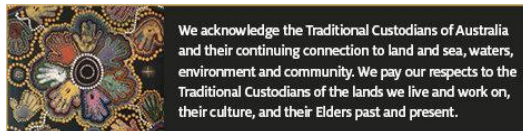
I understand Agriculture Victoria investigated this matter but took no action against the transporter, other than reminding it of its obligations under the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (LAND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK). Those guidelines require transporters to take reasonable steps to protect livestock from the impact of severe weather.

We have spoken to one OPV who says the incident was "horrific". We've also seen photos of the incident and plan to publish them.

The questions I have are:

- what actions did the department take following this incident?
- was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?
- did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:25 PM**From:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#)**Sent:** Tuesday, 15 April 2025 9:52:08 AM**To:** [Ag Media](#) **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** [Simpson, Tim](#) [Sanson -Fisher, Jadd](#)**Cc:** [Wellington, Michelle](#) [Way, Dennis](#) **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)****Subject:** RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** NoneHi **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

I am happy with this approach.

Christine

From: Ag Media**Sent:** Tuesday, 15 April 2025 9:46 AM**To:** **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** Ag Media ; Simpson, Tim ; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd ; Mulhearn, Christine**Cc:** Wellington, Michelle ; Way, Dennis ; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)****Subject:** RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100

Thanks **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

Christine, Jadd & Tim, happy with this approach? Can we have confirmation by 11:30 please?

Cheers

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.auwww.agriculture.gov.au

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 9:19 AM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson - Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: [FOLLOW-UP] MEDIA INQUIRY- DUE COB- Query re: on-plant veterinarian program - Guardian Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Suggest we provide a very flat response on this one as transport of livestock is not regulated by the department.

- This matter was referred by the department to NSW Department of Primary Industries.
 - *That is, the regulatory agency where the incident was detected.*
- The transport of livestock is regulated through State and Territory legislation and implemented by the associated regulatory agency

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary

Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 14 April 2025 10:33 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson - Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

\sb100

Good morning all,

We have another follow-up from the Guardian for their OVP piece. I'm including the majority of the message for context- the questions themselves are in bold.

I'm assuming that first responses will fall to s. 22(1)(a)(ii) and Christine, with Tim and Jadd checking afterwards? We're hoping to have a response ready for Dep Sec clearance by COB to meet the journalist's deadline. Please let us know if you have any queries or concerns.

MEDIA INQUIRY

I just had a follow-up query about one particular incident that we plan to report. On 19 April 2022, a livestock transport moved 600 head of sheep from near Shepparton to an export abattoir near Dubbo. The wet, cold conditions caused mass death on the truck, leading to the deaths of 103 sheep that were suffering hypothermia/exposure. The vast majority of the dead sheep were on the top deck of the truck, which appears to have been uncovered. They were discovered about 4pm in Forbes that day. The driver had been travelling since 7am. The last livestock check was about midday, four hours before the dead sheep were discovered near Forbes.

I understand Agriculture Victoria investigated this matter but took no action against the transporter, other than reminding it of its obligations under the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (LAND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK). Those guidelines require transporters to take reasonable steps to protect livestock from the impact of severe weather.

We have spoken to one OPV who says the incident was "horrific". We've also seen photos of the incident and plan to publish them.

The questions I have are:

- what actions did the department take following this incident?**
- was it referred by the department to Agriculture Victoria? Is it satisfied with the investigation and non-penalty by the state regulator?**
- did the department have its own enforcement options in relation to this incident?**

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.au

www.agriculture.gov.au



\sb160

\qc\ri100\s100OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:57 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:17:17 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 92

Page 453 of 505

Hi Dennis

Were just framing some words around this and having a few internal discussions around scope of 'own volition'. Should be back shortly ☺

Cheers, s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 12:26 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Campbell, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Apologies – I know s. 22(1)(a)(ii) has been caught up in industry meetings. The question sits with his team in MEB.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – Is there a set of words that addresses the highlighted the question.

Dennis Way

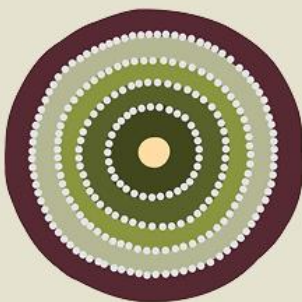
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch

Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

GPO Box 858, Canberra, ACT, 2601



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 1:06 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]
LEX-33635

Page 454 of 505

OFFICIAL

Hi all,

Following up on [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) email below: we're still missing an answer to q2, [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) and Dennis, could you let me know whose patch that sits in so we can pull something together asap please?

Many thanks,

[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.au

www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 11:20 AM

Subject: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thank you Dennis and [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)](#)

Just collating what we have so far in response to this enquiry (just waiting on a response for Question 2 – I'm not sure whose area that one sits with?):

S. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

If you can get a response to us by 1pm today, we can proceed to further legal, FAS and Dep Sec clearance of these (before they go back to the reporter Thursday).

I have attached our response returned in response to this reporter's initial questions and his initial enquiry (which contains further background).

Please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 10:36 AM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine

<Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Black, Tom

<Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>;

Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks. Suggested response below – possibly too many words but hopefully provides a bit more context.

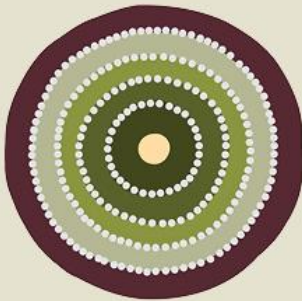
s. 47E(d)

S. 47E(d)

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile **s. 47F(1)**

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



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OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:57 AM

To: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thank you **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

Just following up on the other three questions sent through yesterday (see below).

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:19 AM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au); Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au); Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au); Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning all

s. 47E(d)

Regards

s. 22(1)(i)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) |

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au)



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 4:40 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au); Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au); Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au); Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au); Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:media@aff.gov.au)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Apologies – including Dennis in this.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 3:17 PM
To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon all,

In addition to below, the Guardian have added another question:

The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- * Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- * Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- * MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- * Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- * Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



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OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM

OFFICIAL

We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
 - * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
 - * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.
2. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

3. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections? 'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Communications and Media Branch
P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:35:44 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:30:59 PM

To: [Mulhearn, Christine](#)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 93

Page 461 of 505

Thanks Christine, s. 47E(d)

However, happy to go with as is suggested if I'm missing something.

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:15 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

What about this

s. 47E(d)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 3:12 PM

To: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Christine

s. 47E(d)

Cheers, s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 1:26 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#); s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](#)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Please don't respond to everyone

LEX-33635

Page 462 of 505

There are people on this email who we should not show our inner workings to

The line in italics is the one I want to use but if you have concerns let me know

s. 47E(d)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 2:17 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis

Were just framing some words around this and having a few internal discussions around scope of 'own volition'. Should be back shortly ☺

Cheers, s. 22(1)(a)

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 12:26 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

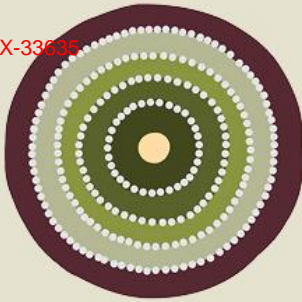
Apologies – I know s. 22(1)(a) has been caught up in industry meetings. The question sits with his team in MEB.

s. 22(1)(a) – Is there a set of words that addresses the highlighted the question.

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 1:06 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi all,

Following up on s. 22(1)(a)(ii) email below: we're still missing an answer to q2, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) and Dennis, could you let me know whose patch that sits in so we can pull something together asap please?

Many thanks,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
media@aff.gov.au
www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 11:20 AM

Subject: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due 1pm today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thank you Dennis and s. 22(1)(a)

S. 47E(d)

If you can get a response to us by 1pm today, we can proceed to further legal, FAS and Dep Sec clearance of these (before they go back to the reporter Thursday).

I have attached our response returned in response to this reporter's initial questions and his initial enquiry (which contains further background).

Please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards.

S. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 10:36 AM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

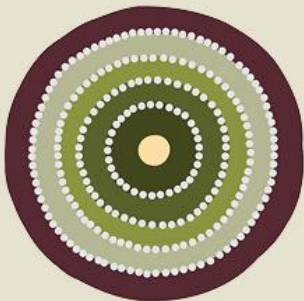
Thanks. Suggested response below – possibly too many words but hopefully provides a bit more context.

s. 47E(d)

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



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OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:57 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Page 466 of 505

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thank you s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Just following up on the other three questions sent through yesterday (see below).

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Communications and Media Branch
P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Cs. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:19 AM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning all

s. 47E(d)

Regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 4:40 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis

Page 467 of 505

<Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn,

Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-

Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Apologies – including Dennis in this.

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 3:17 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn,

Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-

Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon all,

In addition to below, the Guardian have added another question:

The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- * Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- * Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- * MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- * Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- * Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.au

www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

2. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

3. 3. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are ~~OPV~~ staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

S. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:35:55 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 11:50:43 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Document 94

Page 470 of 505

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

I just noticed that on ELMER3, the '[Quick Reference Card – Animal Welfare Regulatory Management](#)' states that OPVs can issue AWIRs .

then management is required to raise an **Anin**

the relevant state/territory animal welfare regi

acute. Our OPVs can also issue AWIRs.

ment sanctions

I was also wondering whether it may be worth quoting the Act as it relates to non-compliance and disclosure of information, i.e.

“An authorised officer may give directions to certain persons to provide assistance or to deal with non--compliance with the requirements of this Act.

OPVs, as authorised officers and entrusted persons under the Export Control Act 2020, may disclose relevant information to a state or territory body if the entrusted person believes that that disclosing the information is necessary for the enforcement of a criminal law, or the enforcement of a law imposing a pecuniary penalty where the state or territory body functions include the enforcement of those laws. The disclosure of protected information to state or territory body is permitted if the use or disclosure is required by a law of a state or territory and done so in good faith.”

Happy for further thoughts on whether this may assist in the response.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

BSc(hons)BVSc

Senior Veterinary Officer | Veterinary Technical Management Team | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Meat Exports Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 9:59 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(i)

s. 47E(d)

Cheers, s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 9:20 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au

Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]
LEX-33635

Page 471 of 505

OFFICIAL

Team, can you look at this please

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | 📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 10:14 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks and will do. I'll leave the animal welfare question to your team.

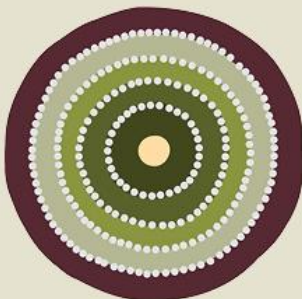
1. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

Dennis Way

Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

From: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:14 AM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning Dennis

Can I leave this response with you. **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

 **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** |  **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 6:47 PM

To: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Further to Dennis and **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** commentary, [see blue font](#).

OFFICIAL

From: **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 1:06 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis and **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**

s. 47E(d)

•

Regards ^{s. 22(1)(a)}

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:51 AM
To: ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au
Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au
Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

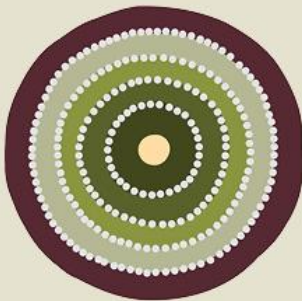
^{s. 22(1)(a)} – Thanks

^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} – can you progress. ^{s. 47E(d)}

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile ^{s. 47F(1)}

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: ^{Cs. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:53 AM
To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Hi Dennis

Please see follow up questions below from the Guardian, not sure how your name has dropped on the list.

s. 22(1)(i)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Vs. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Sanson - Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au

Subject: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- LEX 33635 Page 475 of 505
- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
 - * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
 - * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.
2. 2. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections? 'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:06 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 10:29:16 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Hi s. 22(1)(i)

s. 47E(d)

Cheers, s. 22(1)(a)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 9:20 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Team, can you look at this please

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary

Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 10:14 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

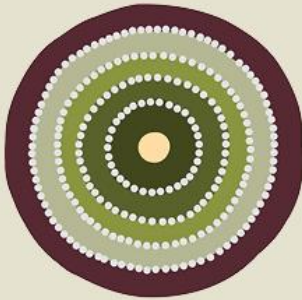
Thanks and will do. I'll leave the animal welfare question to your team.

1. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

Dennis Way

Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch

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



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:14 AM
To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning Dennis

Can I leave this response with you. s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(i)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(iii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <e@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 6:47 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: Cs. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 1:06 PM

To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au>

Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis and ^{s. 22(1)(i)}

^{s. 47E(d),s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

•

Regards ^{s. 22(1)(a)}

OFFICIAL

From: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:51 AM

To: ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} aff.gov.au; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au>

Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}

^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

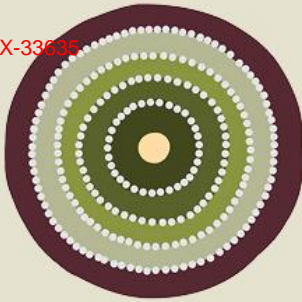
^{s. 22(1)(a)} – Thanks

Mark, Andrew – can you progress. ^{s. 47E(d)}

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary |Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile +^{s. 47F(1)}

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



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OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:53 AM
To: Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: FW: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL

Hi Dennis

Please see follow up questions below from the Guardian, not sure how your name has dropped on the list.

s. 22(1)(e)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
 Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>



Australian Government
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>; Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@aff.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au)>
Subject: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

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Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

Page 480 of 505

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

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If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

S. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

Archived: Monday, 12 May 2025 4:37:53 PM

From: [Way, Dennis](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

To: [Ag Media](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [Simpson, Tim](#) [Sanson-Fisher, Jadd](#) [Mulhearn, Christine](#)

Cc: [Sanson-Fisher, Jadd](#) [Wellington, Michelle](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [Curran, Carmel](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [Black, s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

[Lysons-Smith, Shane](#) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licensed abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Documents 96

Page 481 of 505

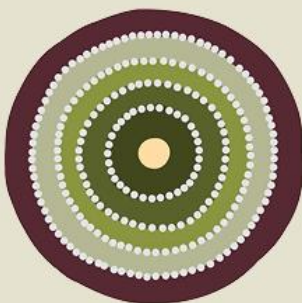
Thanks. Suggested response below – possibly too many words but hopefully provides a bit more context.

s. 47E(d)

Dennis Way
Assistant Secretary | Veterinary and Export Meat Branch
Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Phone +61 3 8391 8497 | Mobile s. 47F(1)

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



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From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:57 AM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
(F) 34635
<Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

@aff.gov.au; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis

Page 482 of 505

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
<Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

@aff.gov.au; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
@aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Mulhearn, Christine
@aff.gov.au; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-
@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thank you s. 22(1)(a)(ii).

Just following up on the other three questions sent through yesterday (see below).

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 2 April 2025 8:19 AM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning all

s. 47E(d)

Regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary

Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

■ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 4:40 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

<Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Way, Dennis <Dennis.Way@aff.gov.au>

Page 483 of 505

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; Fisher <Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Apologies – including Dennis in this.

Kind regards.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 3:17 PM

To: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Media@aff.gov.au>

<Media@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>

Cc: Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Vs. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; Fisher <Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Lysons-Smith, Shane <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <Shane.Lysons-Smith@aff.gov.au>

Subject: RE: MEDIA ENQUIRY FOLLOW UP: Due COB today - on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs - Guardian

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon all,

In addition to below, the Guardian have added another question:

The FTP say they have submitted complaints about seven export abattoirs. They are:

- * Diamond Valley Pork, Laverton VIC (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Tasmanian Quality Meats, Cressy TAS (prepared and lodged by Animals Australia, in relation to FTP footage)
- * Ralph's Meats, Seymour VIC
- * Game Meats Company, Eurobin VIC
- * MD Foods, Echuca VIC
- * Cedar Meats, Brooklyn VIC
- * Greenmountain Food Processing, Coominya QLD

Has the department received those complaints and investigated those matters?

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media Team | 02 6272 3232 | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

media@aff.gov.au

www.agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

From: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:48 AM

OFFICIAL

Good morning all,

We've had some follow-up questions from the Guardian and their enquiry regarding on plant veterinarians working inside export-licenced abattoirs (my apologies).

Investigative journalist Christopher Knaus asks below:

"We just wanted to put some follow-up questions to the department for further clarity on a few points. Also, I should note these are not statements made by the Guardian. They are being made by OPVs, former and current, in formalised internal and external complaints.

The follow up questions are below in bold:

1. The department says: "Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV". The 2019 Ombudsman complaint, made by roughly half the permanent OPV staff in NSW, explicitly stated that "For Instance, it is an accepted VEMS practice to have OPVs cover two establishments in the one day, leave establishments with no OPV for periods of greater than two days, and/or chronically understaff establishments by replacing OPVs with FSMAs. Some establishments in NSW have been without vets for 20 or more days in a year. This is not reflected in the OPV roster, which is published by VEMS weekly, but is not always reflective of what actually happens on plant." - **Are you saying that the situation has improved since 2019? Or that the ombudsman complaint is wrong?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations? 'a0

- * Export abattoirs that require an OPV do not operate without an OPV.
- * The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- * The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.

2. The department says: "This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities." The OPVs we have spoken to have said they are no longer able to directly write and submit welfare complaints of their own volition to state regulators. They say they are restricted only to overseeing the abattoir's self-reporting and that, if this doesn't occur, they often don't have the backing of their superiors, including technical managers, to take it further - **Is the department saying this is not true?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- * This is incorrect. OPVs will, and do, undertake action(s) where an incident has not been identified or acted upon appropriately by an establishment, including reporting the incident to relevant state/territory authorities.
- * The department also ensures that appropriate regulatory action is taken under the export control legislation where necessary.
- * OPVs are encouraged to contact the department's senior veterinary technical managers for support in undertaking these actions if they need to do so.

3. 3. The department says: "This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock." The OPVs we have spoken to say the WHS controls introduced by the department relate to ensuring animals are restrained before entering a pen. They say this is impossible in practice because most abattoirs do not have the facilities or resources to ensure animals are restrained for ante mortem inspections. This makes it an effective ban on entering pens - **Does the department dispute this? What level of restraint do the animals need to be under before an OPV can enter the pen? How many livestock handlers are needed and at what ratio to livestock?**

This is in reference to our response to the question below sent back yesterday:

Why are ~~OPV~~ staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?'a0

This is incorrect. Staff can enter pens where there are appropriate WHS controls in place, including for example establishment livestock handlers being present to assist in the handling and movement of stock.

I've attached a copy of his original enquiry here for reference, as well as the full response that went back to him yesterday.

He's requested a deadline of tomorrow afternoon, but this may be a bit ambitious given current caretaker requirements etc.

If you can come back to us by COB today with a response, we can initiate further clearances.

Apologies again and thanks for all your work on this.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Kind regards,

S. 22(1)(a)(ii) (she/her)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:37:47 PM**From:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#)**Sent:** Saturday, 19 April 2025 5:45:09 PM**To:** [Saunders, Justine](#) [Fennessy, Adam](#)**Cc:** **s. 22(1)(a)(ii)** [Lane, Peta](#) [Simpson, Tim](#) [Ag Media Sanson -Fisher, Jadd](#) [Hutchison, Tina](#) [Ireland, Cassandra](#) [Mundy, Leanne](#) [Carr, Rossana](#)**Subject:** Guardian article: departmental veterinary oversight at abattoirs**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None**Attachments:**[190425 WORKING DRAFT DEPT TPS - Guardian Export Abattoirs.docx](#);

Good afternoon all,

I hope you are all enjoying the Easter break.

As you may be aware, the Guardian has published its article on the departmental veterinary oversight at abattoirs <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/apr/19/shocking-animal-cruelty-claims-as-vets-blow-whistle-on-export-abattoirs-ntwnfb>.

I would recommend that the department does not respond to the article or proactively put anything into the media and only respond if needed. I have developed the attached talking points based off information already developed if we choose to respond to this matter. Cass/Jadd – you have seen all of this bar the last dot point but please let me know if you have any concerns.

Given this is a departmental matter, I would also propose not advising the Minister or the Ministers Office.

If anyone has concerns or would like different tactics please let me know.

Christine

Christine Mulhearn

Acting First Assistant Secretary | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Ph:02 6272 5617

MOB: **s. 47F(1)**

Email: christine.mulhearn@aff.gov.au



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:51 PM
From: [Mulhearn, Christine](#)
To: [Ag Media](#)
Subject: Re: for review please: Guardian article [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: Normal
Sensitivity: None

Thanks ^{s. 22(1)(a)}

From: Ag Media
Sent: Saturday, April 19, 2025 5:15:48 PM
To: Mulhearn, Christine ; Ag Media
Subject: RE: for review please: Guardian article [SEC=OFFICIAL]

\ri100OFFICIAL

Good afternoon Christine,

I've made no changes, they look good to me.

I have patched them into our media talking points template, please see attached.

Thank you, let us know if we can be of any further assistance!

Kindest,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

P: 02 6272 3232 | E: ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)} @aff.gov.au or media@aff.gov.au

\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

From: Mulhearn, Christine
Sent: Saturday, 19 April 2025 4:59 PM
To: Ag Media
Subject: for review please: Guardian article [SEC=OFFICIAL]

\sb100

Hello my friends in AgMedia,

Sorry to disturb you Easter Saturday. I have crafted some lines (mostly from stuff we have all seen before) that can be utilised in we require a response to the Guardian article at the request of Dep Sec (a/g) Lane. Before I send them wider can you please have a look and make any adjustments you see fit. Jadd will need to have a look as well.

S. 47E(d)

Christine

Christine Mulhearn

Acting First Assistant Secretary | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Ph:02 6272 5617

MOB: s. 47F(1)



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\qc\ri100\sb100OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:33 PM
From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s. 47F(1)
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: RE: article
Importance: Normal
Sensitivity: None

Hi s. 47F(1),

Thank you and yes, we are aware of the article. Appreciate you keeping us in the loop.

Let me know if you need anything from our end.

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

BSc(hons)BVSc

Senior Veterinary Officer | Veterinary Technical Management Team | s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Meat Exports Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

From: s. 47F(1) @dpi.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 30 April 2025 3:43 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: article

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

You're probably well aware of this, however, it has come through to me via a Ministerial request to respond to a complaint from a member of the public.

For your awareness in case you haven't seen it:

[Shocking animal cruelty claims as vets blow whistle on export abattoirs | Australia news | The Guardian](#)

Kind regards,

s. 47F(1)

s. 47F(1) BVSc
Team Leader Policy and Programs (Livestock)
Animal Welfare Unit | Agriculture and Biosecurity
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

M s. 47F(1)
E s. 47F(1) [@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.47F(1)@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

nsw.gov.au/dpird

105 Prince St, Orange NSW 2800



**Department of Primary Industries
and Regional Development**

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:36:54 PM**From:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii)**To:** [Mulhearn, Christine](#)**Subject:** RE: Guardian article: departmental veterinary oversight at abattoirs [SEC=OFFICIAL]**Importance:** Normal**Sensitivity:** None

Hi Christine

For your visibility, a small number of on-plant staff have contacted Assistant Directors regarding the Guardian article.

For your consideration, would it be worth a quick email to OPVs or a mention at Div Download, acknowledging the Guardian story, confirming the department's position, affirming the importance of the OPVs' role as a regulator and recognising the good job that OPVs do? Also reminding them of options e.g. EAP, peer support network if they need support.

I don't expect any messaging from the department will change the minds of the few who empathise with the 'whistleblowers', I'm thinking more about the new recruits and those who, day in day out, do a good job and have some faith in the system.

Just a thought. Happy to discuss.

Regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Mulhearn, Christine <Christine.Mulhearn@aff.gov.au>**Sent:** Saturday, 19 April 2025 5:45 PM**To:** Saunders, Justine <Justine.Saunders@aff.gov.au>; Fennessy, Adam <Adam.Fennessy@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au; Lane, Peta <Peta.Lane@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd <Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Hutchison, Tina <Tina.Hutchison@aff.gov.au>; Ireland, Cassandra <Cassandra.Ireland@aff.gov.au>; Mundy, Leanne <Leanne.Mundy@aff.gov.au>; Carr, Rossana <Rossana.Carr@aff.gov.au>

Subject: Guardian article: departmental veterinary oversight at abattoirs [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon all,

I hope you are all enjoying the Easter break.

As you may be aware, the Guardian has published its article on the departmental veterinary oversight at abattoirs <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/apr/19/shocking-animal-cruelty-claims-as-vets-blow-whistle-on-export-abattoirs-ntwnfb>.

I would recommend that the department does not respond to the article or proactively put anything into the media and only respond if needed. I have developed the attached talking points based off information already developed if we choose to respond to this matter. Cass/Jadd – you have seen all of this bar the last dot point but please let me know if you have any concerns.

Given this is a departmental matter, I would also propose not advising the Minister or the Ministers Office.

If anyone has concerns or would like different tactics please let me know.

Christine

Christine Mulhearn

Acting First Assistant Secretary | Exports and Veterinary Services Division

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Ph:02 6272 5617

MOB: s. 47F(1)

Email: christine.mulhearn@aff.gov.au



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OFFICIAL

LEX-33635

Archived: Friday, 9 May 2025 3:35:30 PM

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Tuesday, 22 April 2025 2:42:58 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: Request for Animal Welfare TPs for Posts [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Importance: Normal

Sensitivity: None

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thanks for reaching out. Given the articles report a number of things (including statements on purported ALP policy that has not been confirmed) any proactive talking points would need to be nuanced very carefully based on the query. This is not something that we can do without seeing the actual query. If relevant posts reach out with the details of reach out from trading partners, then we will provide some lines very quickly.

Thanks

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/Assistant Secretary
Meat Export Branch | Exports and Veterinary Services Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

📧 s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | ✉ s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 22 April 2025 2:00 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@aff.gov.au>
Subject: Request for Animal Welfare TPs for Posts [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Hope you're well.

Our Washington and UK posts have requested TPs to have on hand in case they receive enquiries at post on animal welfare in Australian abattoirs in light of recent reporting in The Guardian Australia:

- * [Shocking animal cruelty claims as vets blow whistle on export abattoirs | Australia news | The Guardian](#)
- * [Labor vows to consider strengthening Australia's animal welfare body after shocking abattoir revelations | Live exports | The Guardian](#)

Given animal welfare is a topical issue in these markets and enquiries are somewhat likely, we'd greatly appreciate if MEB can please send through a few TPs for posts to drawn on as needed by **COB today**. We'll of course keep you looped into any approaches they receive.

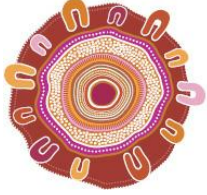
Best regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/g Assistant Secretary | International Organisations & Negotiations Branch

Phone: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Trade & International Division | Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

OFFICIAL**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
BACK POCKET BRIEF****BP-0X: RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE GUARDIAN****Issue**

- On 24 March 2025, the department received questions from *The Guardian's* chief investigative journalist, Christopher Kaus, relating to the department's regulatory oversight, including a 2019 Public Interest Disclosure (PID) and a 2023 resignation letter from On-Plant Veterinarians (OPVs).
- A departmental response on each question was provided to the publication, via the department's media team, on Wednesday 27 March.

Questions asked by *The Guardian*

What is the department's response to allegations the OPV system suffers from profound problems that restrict veterinarians' ability to act on animal welfare? Does the department dispute any of the facts outlined above? (See background information provided by The Guardian).

- Export-registered establishments are primarily responsible for identifying and actively managing animal welfare incidents in accordance with the *Australian Meat Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption* (AS4696:2023) and any state/territory legislative requirements.
- The department's On-Plant Veterinarian will direct an establishment to take action where an incident has not been identified by the establishment, or where the establishment is not taking appropriate action.
- Export-registered establishments are expected to comply with state/territory animal welfare requirements and follow direction given by the department to assist investigations into animal welfare incidents.

SES lead: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Phone number: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	Contact Officer: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Phone number: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Date cleared by FAS: 26/03/25	Document 112 Bpb-Meb 0x Responses To Questions Asked By The Guardian

Last updated: 11/06/2025 11:41 AM

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OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
BACK POCKET BRIEF**

What is the department's response to allegations of chronic understaffing, that has left some abattoirs without an OPV presence? Is this in breach of Australia's trade obligations?

- The department requires 110 OPVs to meet industry needs as per the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS).
- The department currently has 162 OPVs employed across the department to ensure we can meet industry needs and allow for backfill for leave as required.
- 23 OPVs have been employed by the department over the last 12 months.
- The department has a short staffing policy in place for each establishment to ensure that we don't breach our trade obligations.

Why are OPV staff unable to make their own reports to state regulators on welfare breaches?

- If an establishment is not meeting the conditions of their Approved Arrangement, such as identifying and/or actioning an animal welfare incident, then OPVs can make their own report to state regulators.
- Every OPV is encouraged to submit an animal welfare incident report to the relevant state/territory authority, and may also issue a Corrective Action Request (CAR) to the establishment to ensure future compliance with their own Approved Arrangement.

Why are OPV staff unable to enter pens to make ante-mortem inspections?

- Department staff can enter pens for ante-mortem inspection if the livestock is restrained.
- A safety notice was circulated to all staff in May 2024 which explained this to all on plant staff. Work Instruction clearly states that on plant staff performing ante-mortem must do the following:
 - not move livestock by themselves;
 - ensure that sufficient and competent establishment livestock handlers are available at all times to assist with ante-mortem inspection;

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OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
BACK POCKET BRIEF**

- not enter pens with unrestrained livestock unless it is necessary (and safe) to do so to conduct an effective ante-mortem inspection; and
- use your professional judgement and not enter a pen with livestock where there is a significant likelihood that you might be injured or have your health compromised.

Why are OPV staff unable to take photos using their mobiles in abattoir premises?

s. 47E(d)

- All department on plant staff are issued with departmental mobile phones.
- Currently, the only restrictions for staff using their mobile devices on plant is to ensure every effort is made to prevent identifying an individual in images, and ensuring no human voice can be heard in videos.
- Individual establishments may have a policy that restricts the use of *departmentally collected* video to be used for building animal welfare cases. This is a separate matter that must be taken up with individual companies.

What action did the department take in response to the 2019 ombudsman complaint? What was the outcome of its internal review?

- The department's Integrity Branch does not have any record of receiving a complaint from the Ombudsman's office. We are unable to comment on the actions of another agency.
- It has never been a case where an establishment has been left unsupported by an OPV for a period of 20 consecutive days.
- On the rare occasion that an OPV cannot be present at an establishment, a Food Safety Meat Assessor (FSMA) is generally onsite providing departmental presence and oversight.
- This only occurs when the *short staffing policy* is enacted to ensure we meet our trade obligations.
- The department has on plant staff allocated geographically to facilitate efficient deployment of staff.

OFFICIAL**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
BACK POCKET BRIEF**

- Additionally, 100 OPVs are headquartered across 74 export meat establishments (out of the 88 currently operating).

What action did the department take in response to the 2023 PID?

- All PID matters are investigated in accordance with the PID Act and Scheme. They are conducted discreetly, in a way that maintains confidentiality. The Act serves to protect disclosers from reprisals and protects their identity by creating offences for disclosing material that may identify them. As such, we cannot comment on material relating to any PID investigation.
- Outcomes from the recommendations of PID investigations may consist of:
 - referral to the relevant business area for improvements in policy or procedures;
 - referral to Internal Investigations for consideration as a fraud or corruption investigation or breaches of the Code of Conduct;
 - Mandatory referral to the National Anti-Corruption Commission
- Disclosable conduct relates to the type of conduct alleged to be occurring, e.g. contravention of a law, maladministration, abuse of public trust. It does not relate to what can or cannot be disclosed to any other agency.

What action did the department take in response to the warnings about ante-mortem inspections contained in an OPV's resignation letter last year?

-

How does the department respond to allegations it is inherently conflicted because of its dual role of promoting trade and meat exports, and monitoring animal welfare?

- The Australian Government, led by DAFF as the regulator of the export meat industry, takes animal welfare seriously. We do not condone or excuse animal abuse in any form, anywhere, within the sector.

OFFICIAL**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
BACK POCKET BRIEF**

- All animal welfare allegations raised with the department, are given timely consideration, including investigation and appropriate action where warranted, in line with the *Export Control Act 2020*.
- Animal welfare is an integral part of market access assurance and in promoting trade to new and emerging export markets. Legislation prevents any perceived conflict in trade/meat exports and animal welfare.
- In accordance with the Australian Meat Standard, the animal welfare outcome is to minimise the risk of injury, pain or suffering with least practical disturbance to animals.
- Over many years, Australia has repeatedly demonstrated a robust export animal processing system to our trading partners, including in matters relating to animal welfare. The department will continue to ensure that the requirements of our trading partners and our legislative frameworks are upheld through rigorous oversight and enforcement.

Does it accept that evidence collected by the Farm Transparency Project at seven export abattoirs shows the OPV system is not working to safeguard animal welfare?

- The department accepts the recently published surveillance footage collected by the *Farm Transparency Project* implicates one (1) export registered abattoir, which has Commonwealth government oversight.
- The department is investigating the incident and will determine whether it is appropriate to take regulatory action. This matter is under investigation, and it is not appropriate to make further comment at this time.
- State and Territory governments hold primary responsibility for setting and enforcing animal welfare legislation. This includes the handling of livestock during production, transportation, and slaughter within their jurisdictions. The department engages with the states and territories to develop nationally consistent standards and guidelines for farm animal welfare.

If asked about the question

OFFICIAL**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
BACK POCKET BRIEF**

- The Australian Government, led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, as the regulator of the export meat industry, takes animal welfare seriously.
- We do not condone or excuse animal abuse in any form, anywhere, within the sector.
- The department rejects the statement made by the Farm Transparency Project about its integrity in performing its regulatory responsibilities at export abattoirs.
- While responsibility for animal welfare rests with the occupiers of export abattoirs themselves - from the moment animals are unloaded through to the point of slaughter - the department strengthens overall animal welfare compliance through stringent verification systems.
- Animal welfare allegations raised with the department, are given timely consideration, including investigations and appropriate action where warranted, in line with the *Export Control Act 2020*.
- State and Territory governments hold primary responsibility for setting and enforcing animal welfare legislation. This includes the handling of livestock during production, transportation, and slaughter within their jurisdictions. The department engages with the states and territories to develop nationally consistent standards and guidelines for farm animal welfare.
- Over many years, Australia has repeatedly demonstrated a robust export animal processing system to our trading partners, including in matters relating to animal welfare. The department will continue to ensure that the requirements of our trading partners and our legislative frameworks are upheld through rigorous oversight and enforcement.

Background information provided to the department by *The Guardian*

- The Australian government relies on a team of on-plant veterinarians (OPVs) working inside export-licensed abattoirs to safeguard animal welfare, prevent meat contamination and ensure the standards of trading partners, like the European Union, China and the United States, are met.

Document 112 Bpb-Meb 0x Responses To Questions Asked By The Guardian

Last updated: 11/06/2025 11:41 AM

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OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
BACK POCKET BRIEF**

- Multiple veterinarians have repeatedly blown the whistle internally and externally on “profound problems” they say are crippling their ability to oversee the industry. They say their ability to monitor animal welfare and report breaches is compromised, and that abattoirs are going unmonitored due to “chronic understaffing”. The complaints have been made across a five-year period by veterinarians working in NSW and Victoria, and include:
- An external complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2019 by half the OPVs working in NSW. This complaint alleges chronic understaffing is leaving abattoirs unmonitored at times, including for up to 20 days per year. The complaint alleged NSW facilities have been left without a permanent veterinarian presence, relying instead on relief staff, and that the rostering documentation did not reflect reality. The complainants said this put Australia in breach of trade obligations with partners that require an OPV presence at all times. “These rosters are regularly completed to look compliant but do not reflect reality,” the complaint alleges. “It is our opinion that this contains a significant hidden threat if discovered by foreign auditors.”
- A public interest disclosure made separately in 2023. That PID was made directly to then minister Murray Watt in 2023. The discloser, a veterinarian who worked for three years at facilities in NSW and Victoria, said there were “profound problems” with the system and that, without action, the failures risked undermining Australia’s trade. “A culture of ‘see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil’ will be entrenched and animal welfare will further suffer and Australia’s reputation in agriculture will plummet, and some countries will take their trade dollars elsewhere,” he warned. The veterinarian said in his PID many of the abattoirs he worked in were competently and professionally run with few welfare incidents, but he also described a series of breaches he witnessed that had gone unreported. During one 2017 audit meeting, he said he witnessed his departmental manager discouraging abattoir staff from reporting an instance of animal cruelty – a pig being struck in the head prior to arriving at the facility – to the state regulator. The PID said: “After the meeting I commented that I was surprised by the [field operations manager’s] response. I stated the animal was clearly injured and suffering. The FOM’s response was to reply ‘I wish you hadn’t told me that’. This was a comment I was to hear many times as I worked as an OPV.” He also described discovering dead cattle on trucks on an almost daily basis at a hot boning plant in Victoria in 2018. “In each case this should have triggered an animal welfare incident

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report. The responsible [area technical manager] was however not able to provide any support for OPVs who wanted to proceed in this manner." The PID described an extreme example in mid-2018 in which he discovered a "cow with a calf stuck in its pelvic canal" in the holding yard. He later learned the calf had likely been there for five days. His PID says: "I informed the staff who were accompanying me that I would remove the calf. I proceeded to remove the calf - a job not made more pleasant by the fact the calf disintegrated in my hands. An event such as this should have triggered an animal welfare incident report. Sadly, the responsible [manager] was too weak in character and instead told me he had apologised to the plant's Quality Assurance Manager. Apparently the OPV is not supposed to render assistance to suffering animals. This ludicrous situation is emblematic of the failure of the OPVs being able to do their job correctly." The PID also described chronic understaffing and near weekly crises as the department struggled to find vets to staff facilities. He said he had been left isolated and unsupported, including by managers in Canberra with no technical expertise in veterinary science. He has now been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his PID. The author of this PID has declined to comment further to the Guardian about the contents of his PID or about the program more broadly and has no knowledge of any other complaints lodged by other OPVs.

- A complaint by a resigning veterinarian last year, in which he warned that OPVs had been left unable to do their job of protecting animal welfare due to rule changes around ante-mortem inspections. His resignation letter said: "The circumstances and conditions of employment as an OPV have changed since I initially accepted the offer. Following my acceptance of the offer of renewed employment, I have been directed by my supervisor to not enter pens containing animals to perform ante-mortem inspection. This will mean that in some instances, especially with small stock, it will not be possible to perform an effective ante-mortem inspection. As a result there will be an adverse effect on detection of animal welfare, food safety and emergency animal disease cases. This will result in unsatisfactory regulatory outcomes. As a registered veterinarian in NSW, animal welfare is the required primary concern and consideration in the practice of veterinary science. The directions I have been given are inconsistent with meeting this requirement and I cannot accept the offer of employment as an OPV."
- We understand the 2023 PID and the 2019 ombudsman complaint prompted internal investigations. The substance of the 2023 PID was found to be

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substantiated, but the department said it was not "disclosable conduct", meaning it would not be disclosed to any other agency. It instead dealt with it through internal recommendations. The 2019 Ombudsman complaint also prompted an internal review and the engagement of consultants. It is not clear what the outcome of this review was.

- We have also spoken with other former OPVs. They say the following:
 - They are unable to write reports on animal welfare incidents and submit them to state regulators. This used to be within their remit. But a process change means now they can only ask abattoir companies to self-report to state regulators and then oversee the self-reporting process. This presents an inherent conflict and significantly curtails their ability to act on animal welfare. The veterinarians said they frequently felt they had no backing from their managers to raise welfare issues, or were actively discouraged from doing so. It also left them vulnerable to bullying, intimidation or harassment from abattoir companies.
 - Staff were also told they were unable to take photos on their own devices inside the abattoir premises. This also limited their ability to document breaches.
 - Staff say understaffing is so bad that veterinarians are being sent interstate to cover a single shift at an abattoir. This might involve 2-3 days of travel to cover a single shift. One said he was sent 220km to cover a single shift.
 - Some staff say the department is inherently conflicted. It has an aim of boosting and promoting trade and the continued/uninterrupted export of meat, but also has a role through the OPV program of monitoring animal welfare. One said: "Their goal is to export meat from Australia and that's what they want to do. Satisfying the importing country's requirements in regards to animal welfare - they're just minor details. They've got to put on a show that they're satisfying those conditions. The reality is a lot of it's just window dressing." Another said that, should foreign auditors discover the reality of Australia's regulation of the industry, "entire markets will be lost overnight". "Our animal welfare is one of Australia's marketing strengths. If lost, markets will also be lost."

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- Activist group *Farm Transparency Project* has collected evidence from seven export abattoirs across the country. The group works by trespassing and installing covert cameras. They say the cameras have recorded shocking footage of welfare breaches and shows the OPV system is not working to prevent such breaches. Animals Australia, a leading animal protection group, says OPVs are being placed in an inherently compromised situation. They have called for an independent office for animal welfare, saying the department is inherently conflicted.