



## **Australian Government**

Australian Government response to the Senate Rural and  
Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee  
report:

Voice for animals (Independent Office of Animal  
Welfare) Bill 2015

February 2016

# Introduction

The Australian Government welcomes the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee report on the *Voice for Animals (Independent Office of Animal Welfare) Bill 2015*.

The Australian Government supports the committee's recommendation not to pass this bill; and agrees that the substantive functions of the proposed statutory authority for animal welfare are already achieved through existing government mechanisms.

Australia's three tiers of government each have animal welfare responsibilities, which vary between jurisdictions. Legislative responsibility for animal welfare in Australia rests primarily with state and territory governments, and local governments. The Australian Government's policies for animal welfare arise from specific powers in relation to external trade and treaties. All governments are concerned about animal welfare and do not condone animal cruelty.

The Australian Government works with the Australian livestock industry to improve the productivity and profitability of the industry, and farm gate returns. There is a strong link between sustainability, animal welfare and livestock industry profitability. Improved animal welfare contributes to:

- increased productivity – improved animal welfare practices lead to contented, healthier animals that produce a higher-quality, higher-value and safer product
- improved competitiveness – systems that are underpinned by robust animal welfare arrangements are likely to improve access of products to domestic and export markets, and achieve higher prices
- sustainability – community acceptance of livestock animal welfare arrangements leads to better market access, higher prices and greater long-term sustainability of livestock industries.

The success of Australia's livestock industries will be increasingly influenced by research, development and strategies that improve animal welfare outcomes.

The Australian Government does not consider the establishment of a new Commonwealth agency necessary to influence issues relating to animal welfare. The Australia Government maintains that the establishment of such an Independent Office of Animal Welfare will result in significant cost to the Commonwealth. In addition to adding a layer of bureaucracy, an independent agency would require enabling legislation, relocations costs and ongoing specialist expertise.

The Australian Government notes the Australian Greens dissenting report to the committee's report. The Australian Government notes the Greens have committed to further consultation with stakeholders to refine and redraft the bill.

## Government response:

### **Recommendation 1**

The committee recommends that the bill not be passed.
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### **Agreed**

The Australian Government supports the committee's recommendation not to pass this bill.