

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Resources



Thursday, 4 June 2020

STANDING WITH FARMERS AGAINST BIOSECURITY THREATS

The Victorian Government will continue to back farmers and protect our biosecurity with strict enforcement of on-the-spot fines for those caught trespassing onto farms in the name of animal activism.

Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes tabled the Government's response to the *Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture* in parliament today, after considering the recommendations published in February.

The Inquiry's findings identified ways to further strengthen approaches to animal welfare and biosecurity, to build and maintain public confidence in agriculture.

The Government's response supports 13 of the 15 recommendations in full, one in principle and did not support one recommendation.

Recommendations supported include incorporating on-the-spot fines for biosecurity breaches caused by trespassers in legislation. The Government will introduce this legislation with a view to making fines for this behaviour among the heaviest in Australia.

Other supported recommendations include working with farmers in developing biosecurity management plans and actions on animal welfare complaints for better public education, and the consideration of implementing closed-circuit cameras in abattoirs.

The Government is already acting to strengthen animal welfare in Victoria through several initiatives, including the modernisation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) regulations.

The Inquiry was conducted by the Victorian Parliament's Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee in 2019 following several illegal activities in the name of animal activism.

It was informed by 506 submissions, seven days of hearings held across country Victoria and Melbourne, and three site visits by committee members.

The Government is committed to maintaining Victoria's high level of biosecurity. The *2019/20 Victorian Budget* included a \$142.5 million boost to our biosecurity system – the largest investment of its type in the history of our state.

The Victorian Government thanks the committee chair Nazih Elasmir MP, committee members and acknowledges the contributions of the many Victorians who made a submission to the inquiry or appeared as a witness.

The government's full response is available on the [Committee's page](#) of the Parliament of Victoria's website.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"Our farmers and agricultural businesses should be free to do their work without fear of being targeted by animal activist groups, who put hard working farming families, biosecurity and the animals they purport to protect at risk."

"These recommendations are not just about deterrence, but also education – the public deserve to know just how hard farmers and agricultural businesses work to keep their animals safe and well looked after."

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