

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Pig Welfare in Victoria

Melbourne – Tuesday 12 March 2024

#### MEMBERS

Georgie Purcell – Chair

David Davis – Deputy Chair

John Berger

Katherine Copsy

Bev McArthur

Tom McIntosh

Evan Mulholland

Sonja Terpstra

#### PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Gaelle Broad

Georgie Crozier

David Ettershank

Michael Galea

Renee Heath

Sarah Mansfield

Rachel Payne

**WITNESSES** (*via videoconference*)

Dr Bidda Jones, Co-Founder and Director, Strategy, and

Dr Jed Goodfellow, Co-Founder and Director, Policy and Government Relations, Australian Alliance for Animals.

**The CHAIR:** I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into Pig Welfare in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any members of the public watching via the live broadcast or in the public gallery.

To kick off, we will just get committee members to introduce themselves starting within the room and on the screen. Mrs Broad.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Hi. I am Gaelle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Bev McArthur, Member for Western Victoria.

**Renee HEATH:** Renee Heath, Member for Eastern Victoria Region.

**Katherine COPSEY:** Katherine Copsey, Member for Southern Metropolitan Region.

**The CHAIR:** Georgie Purcell, Chair and Northern Victoria Region.

**John BERGER:** John Berger, Member for Southern Metro.

**The CHAIR:** Wonderful. Thanks, members. Welcome, and thank you for coming along today, Jed and Bidda.

All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following this hearing. Transcripts will then ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, can you please state your full names and the organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Jed Goodfellow, policy director at Australian Alliance for Animals.

**Bidda JONES:** Bidda Jones, Director of Strategy at the Australian Alliance for Animals.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We now welcome your opening comments but ask that they are kept to around a maximum of 10 minutes to ensure that we have plenty of time for discussion and questions.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Great. Thanks very much, Chair. Good morning, committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this very important inquiry today. The Australian Alliance for Animals is a relatively new national charity, established in 2022 to bring together six of Australia's leading animal protection organisations with a combined supporter base of over 2 million people, many of whom reside in Victoria. The alliance was established to create and provide a more coordinated voice to government on behalf of our members, particularly on structural and institutional issues in animal welfare policy that affect all areas

of animal use and interaction and its regulation. It is really these structural and institutional issues that were the focus of our submission to the inquiry, and they will be the focus of our contributions here today as well.

No doubt over the course of today you will hear many harrowing of animal mistreatment within the pig industry. Of course just last night we were presented with further shocking scenes of animal abuse aired on the ABC's 7.30 program – the latest in a seemingly never-ending stream of cases within this industry. And while cases of overt abuse are disturbing, it is the routine and legal practices that cause the greatest quantum of suffering to animals. These include extreme confinement systems which prevent these intelligent, inquisitive and sentient animals from even be able to turn around let alone engage in any kind of normal behaviours and the various bodily mutilations such as tail docking, castration, teeth clipping and ear notching undertaken without any form of pain relief. Our submission supports the comprehensive submissions of Animals Australia and RSPCA Victoria on these issues, particularly with respect to proposals to phase out the use of sow stalls, boar stalls and farrowing crates. These practices are simply not consistent with 21st century Australian values.

Australians care about animal welfare, and they do not agree with practices that cause distress and suffering to animals. Poll after poll, survey after survey, has shown that Australians oppose such practices, so there is clearly an evident gap here between what the law permits on the one hand and what the community expects on the other. We have somewhat of a democratic deficit, and we need to ask the question as to why that is the case: why are the community's expectations around animal welfare not translating into our laws and standards?

To answer that question we think it is instructive to look at the way animal welfare is governed – who has carriage of animal welfare policies, standards and regulation on behalf of the community. It is ministers for agriculture and departments of agriculture that are delegated with this important function. There is no independent government agency that deals with animal welfare policy. Of course the RSPCA plays a role in enforcement, but it is not responsible for the administration of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* nor the development of standards and policies underpinning that Act.

This is problematic for a range of reasons. Firstly, it gives rise to competing responsibilities. The primary objective of agriculture departments is to promote productive and profitable primary industries, and for good reason. Likewise agriculture ministers are highly attuned to the views and concerns of the agricultural sector, and rightly so. These institutions exist to support and promote agriculture industries, and this is in itself a public good, but the question remains whether these same institutions should also be responsible for delivering on an increasingly important area of public policy that often conflicts with these goals. Improving animal welfare standards within the pig industry may not always align with increasing the gross value of production of that industry and vice versa. When these factors collide it is all but a fait accompli as to which factor will win out when agriculture ministers and agriculture departments are making the final call. This is not good governance. It is an arrangement that is a relic of a past era when animal welfare was poorly understood both scientifically and socially, and it leads to policy and standards that routinely fall below community expectations, which ironically exposes the very industries this system was designed to protect to greater social licence risks.

If we want to see standards and laws that are fit for 21st-century Australian values, and ultimately if we want to see less animal abuse and less routine animal suffering, these governance arrangements need to change, and Victoria has a prime opportunity to lead the way in this regard. Establishing an independent Victorian office of animal welfare to oversee the development of policy and standards and to provide a source of expert advice to government would go long way to creating a more robust, inclusive and evidence-based animal welfare system for Victoria. Actively promoting and supporting the establishment of a national animal welfare commission at the federal level to provide national leadership and coordination will equally go a long way to achieving similar outcomes at a national level.

The good news is these reforms already have the support of the Australian community. Last year we commissioned leading behaviour change research institute BehaviourWorks Australia to survey Australian community views and expectations around the way animal welfare policy is developed and governed. Over 80 per cent of Australians believe the final say on animal welfare policy decisions should be made by an independent and impartial body. Sixty-eight per cent supported this being an independent animal welfare agency, while only 22 per cent supported the current arrangements with departments of agriculture making these final decisions. So we would ask the committee members to seriously consider these proposals to acknowledge the challenges posed by current governance arrangements and to support proposals for changing this governance system to better reflect 21st-century Victorian values around animal welfare.

Thank you very much, committee members. We look forward to your questions.

**The CHAIR:** Wonderful, thank you. Committee members, I now have a timer on the screen, so I am going to use that so everyone knows that they are getting fair timing. We will kick off with Ms Broad.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Thank you very much. This inquiry was prompted by unlawful activities by the Farm Transparency Project. Does your organisation encourage or condone people breaking the law by trespassing on private property?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** No, we do not.

**Gaelle BROAD:** And are you willing to expel members who break the law? For example, trespassing on or breaking and entering at private farms?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Our six members do not engage in these activities. Our policy is that we do not condone law-breaking behaviour. However, we do acknowledge the extent to which the footage and evidence that has come from recent investigations has been in the public interest. That is very evident by virtue of the level of media and public political debate. It is evidenced by the fact that this inquiry exists today – that these issues that have been exposed by these activities have been in the public interest and are leading to addressing issues that the Victorian community are very concerned about.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Do you recognise that those activities have had a significant impact on a lot of innocent farms and farm families – that it has had a big impact on them?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Look, I think it is certainly unfortunate that activists do need to engage in these activities. Ideally, we would have a robust compliance-monitoring system in place – an independent one that ensures that animal welfare standards are being complied with and that provides that assurance to the Victorian community so that activists do not feel compelled to engage in these sorts of behaviours. So I think the best way to curb that sort of behaviour is to invest in having a robust and independent animal welfare compliance-monitoring system. By doing that you take away the incentive for activists to engage in this sort of conduct.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Do you understand the impact on private properties because of the biosecurity management plans in place, which include strict rules around the movement of people?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Absolutely. We recognise the importance of maintaining strict biosecurity protocols. We are not aware of any biosecurity outbreaks or incursions as a result of activist activities, but nevertheless it is a very important concern and one that we would certainly hope that activists take into account when engaging in these activities.

**Bidda JONES:** I would just like to add to that, just in terms of the points that Jed made about the lack of regulatory structure and transparency and accountability in the industry. My background is as an animal welfare scientist, and over the 30 years I have worked in this area for the RSPCA and now for the Alliance for Animals, I have been asked to comment on footage obtained through various different means – legal, covert and otherwise – and over that time it is footage that has made more difference to advances in animal welfare than any other medium. When people actually see the welfare issues that are portrayed through footage, they demand action as a result. We would like to see a regulatory system where that transparency and accountability are part of the system – that these sorts of activities do not need to occur to highlight the welfare issues that exist in an industry such as pig farming.

**Gaelle BROAD:** My understanding is that there is, under the Act, a role for inspectors to be able to visit properties. So that does exist at the moment?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** We would be – sorry, Bidda.

**Bidda JONES:** No, you go on.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Yes. I mean, we would be very, very interested to find out more information about that regime, because the fact of the matter is there is no transparency around it. We do not know who is conducting inspections, how often those inspections are conducted or what the results of those inspections are. There is limited to no transparency around that compliance monitoring system. My understanding is that in

Victoria, under the current *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*, there is no power for engaging in unannounced inspections to conduct audits of facilities, whereas that power does exist in other states and territories. That would be certainly something we would encourage committee members to consider, to create a more robust arrangement for on-the-spot inspections, but also for whatever the relevant department is – Agriculture Victoria – to be more transparent about providing information relating to those compliance monitoring activities on their website so that people can see that there is actually a system in place that is being operationalised and enforced.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Ms Broad. Mrs McArthur.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Thank you. Jed, you said you have got six members. Did I hear you correctly?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** That is correct – organisational members.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Why have you got any relevance to even appear to us today, if you are an organisation with six members?

**The CHAIR:** Mrs McArthur! Mrs McArthur, I spoke to the committee the other day about respecting this hearing and the fact that it is a reflection of us as a workplace and a Parliament, and I ask that your questions are in line with the terms of reference.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Well, they are. I want to know the veracity of this organisation, if it has got six members.

**The CHAIR:** Perhaps you could ask who the member organisations are.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** I am very happy to answer your question.

**Bev McARTHUR:** He is happy to answer the question, Chair.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Thank you, Chair. I am very happy to answer that question. We have six organisational members. Those members have a supporter base, as I mentioned earlier, of over 2 million people in Australia, many of those Victorian residents. So in terms of the representational capacity of our organisation, I would suggest that we are probably representing more Victorians here today than any other organisation that is appearing before the committee.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Given that you are interested in transparency, perhaps you will detail to us that membership.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Well, we are certainly not going to be putting on public record the personal details of 2 million people. Our membership, in terms of the organisational membership, is on our website for all to see, and within the supporter bases of those members reside the details and the data of over 2 million people in Australia. For obvious reasons we cannot provide that data, but in terms of the organisational membership, you can see that on our website.

**Bev McARTHUR:** You say that you would like an independent agency to be monitoring animal welfare. Can you give me any examples of a government agency that is independent?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Look, there are plenty of government agencies that are established via legislation that protect their independence. Of course I understand your point, that when it comes to funding, when it comes to the appointment of key personnel et cetera, the government of the day will still have a degree of influence over that particular body, but there are ways and means of creating and building greater independence into the system through the enabling legislation, and that is certainly what we would be recommending with respect to the establishment of a Victorian office of animal welfare, that it is established under the new animal care and protection law that the Victorian government is looking at introducing in the near future, where the independence of that body is established and protected through legislation. It is our view that that is very much needed at the current time and that it will go a long way to addressing some of the systemic issues that we see within the policy and governance framework for animal welfare in Australia.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Is it your view that the pig industry should be shut down?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** No. Our submission today is all about the institutional and structural changes that are required in order to create a more independent policy framework for animal welfare, one that better reflects Australian community views and values with respect to animal welfare. We understand that the public will continue consuming meat for some time to come, so livestock industries are going to be around for the foreseeable future. These reforms in our view may very well assist those industries as well in terms of creating a more robust animal welfare system that addresses some of the existential risks that livestock industries face with respect to animal welfare and other issues that the public are very concerned about.

I do not think that livestock industries should be concerned about these sorts of proposals. but I think the current system is not serving their interests well at all. Indeed some leaders within the ag sector are calling out for further investment in and reforms to the animal welfare standard-setting system because it is currently failing. We are not seeing evidence-based standards and we are not seeing the standards implemented in an equally consistent way, and it is taking many, many years for those standards to actually be regulated at the state level.

**Bev McARTHUR:** One of your organisation's members is Voiceless, which states on their website that their aim is to become a plant-based future. I quote, 'Voiceless is proud to support farmers in embracing a plant-based future.' Doesn't that go to the point that you actually would like to shut down the meat industry?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** No. No, it does not. Our members of course have a –

**Bev McARTHUR:** Or don't you support their positions?

**The CHAIR:** Can we allow the witnesses to answer the questions, please?

**Bev McARTHUR:** Do you support their position?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Our members have a range of positions on a range of issues. We have been established to represent them on a very defined policy agenda, which is all about institutional and structural change to address these governance deficiencies. So Voiceless and other members of our alliance may have those policies that they pursue. Our role and our function are to provide a conduit directly to government on the policy reforms that will improve the system across the board so that we see a more independent framework that is more inclusive of community views and places greater weight on the interests of animals and scientific evidence in developing the nation's animal welfare standards.

**Bidda JONES:** It is quite clear looking at the submissions that have been made to this inquiry. There are hundreds of submissions that have come from ordinary members of the public. I was just looking through them last night. You can see that the majority that I read from individuals are from meat-eating people who are absolutely horrified at the fact that the assumptions that they have made about the animal welfare treatment and the humaneness of pig farming and what happens to pigs during slaughter are not being met, and they are asking for change. They are clearly saying, 'This has greatly concerned me. It has concerned me to the point where I am writing a submission to an inquiry.' These are just ordinary members of the public who have responded to what they have seen on their TV screens and have been outraged by it. I think to turn that into an anti-farming argument is just disingenuous to those people.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mrs McArthur. Dr Heath.

**Renee HEATH:** Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. Have you raised any allegations of bad farming practices with the regulator Animal Welfare Victoria? If so, when and what allegations?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** No, we have not raised any allegations with the regulator.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Why not?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Well, no allegations have been brought to our attention. We have only seen the media reports that have come out. Those allegations are generally presented straight to authorities, so either Agriculture Victoria, PrimeSafe or RSPCA Victoria. We do not play a role in enforcement. But if evidence is provided to us, of course we would raise that with the relevant authorities.

**Renee HEATH:** Have you raised any with the relevant authorities?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** No. No evidence has been brought directly to us in order to do that.

**Renee HEATH:** Okay, thank you. In your opening statements, and I wrote it down, you referenced what we saw, which was horrific footage, last night on TV and you said that it was the latest in a never-ending stream of abuse in this industry. Is that sort of practice common in the pig industry?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Well, the episode last night showed what I would hope would be breaches of animal welfare law, but in addition to that it showed what I described earlier as the routine forms of animal harm and animal suffering – the bludgeoning of piglets on concrete floors, the teeth clipping, the tail docking et cetera without pain relief. These are all practices that are permitted under our code of practice for the welfare of pigs, and there are practices that under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* they are exempt from challenge or prosecution by virtue of complying with the industry code. Nevertheless they cause tremendous suffering, fear, pain and distress to these animals. So while, yes, we saw some absolutely horrendous practices – I mean, of course there was the charge of bestiality that came out of that footage as well.

**Renee HEATH:** That is what I was referring to. So you would not say that that is common?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** I would very much hope not. I would say that that is not common, and I would very much hope that that is the case.

**Renee HEATH:** Thank you. I just wanted to clarify because I did think that that is what you were referring to and I thought that would be – well, I do not have to say much more on that.

Further to Ms Broad's questioning about the biosecurity management plans that are in place, do you understand that individuals trespassing onto a property could potentially lead to mass animal death by contravening those arrangements?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Look, we certainly acknowledge that there is a risk. There is a risk with anybody going onto an agricultural facility, and we would absolutely counsel and encourage anybody who is entering onto a property, whether lawfully or not, to take biosecurity precautions. As I said earlier, we are not aware of any biosecurity outbreaks or incursions that have occurred as a result of activist activities, but nevertheless that does not mean there is not a risk, and I think it is incumbent upon everybody to be ensuring that they are taking those biosecurity protocols very seriously.

**Renee HEATH:** And then, following on from one of Mrs McArthur's questions about Voiceless, which states on their website that their aim is to become a plant-based future, does this mean that any form of pig farming would be unacceptable to your members?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Look, as I explained earlier, our members have different views on a range of matters. We are here to represent them on a pre-agreed policy reform agenda, and that is looking at the institutional or structural change that is required to create a more independent, robust animal welfare system in this country. So questions around Voiceless's position on promoting plant-based proteins would need to be directed towards them.

**Renee HEATH:** Okay. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Dr Heath. Ms Copsey.

**Katherine COPSEY:** Thank you very much for your presentation and for attending the hearing this morning. I wanted to go to some of the material that you have presented around public opinion and surveys around sentience in your submission attachment. I wondered if you could speak briefly to the views of the community that you have been able to ascertain around the sentience of both companion animals, agricultural animals and so on.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Yes, absolutely. Thanks for the question. Bidha, would you like to lead on that one?

**Bidha JONES:** Yes, certainly. When we surveyed – well, we did not do the survey; it was BehaviourWorks, so it is a commissioned survey that was run by BehaviourWorks, which is an offshoot of Monash University.

We were asking members of the public around their views about the sentience of different groups of animals, and what is absolutely clear is that going across all groups of vertebrate species – so that is animals with a backbone, and that goes from mammals, which are most of the farmed animal species, to birds as well – it is absolutely clear that there is a really strong level of understanding in the public that those groups of animals are sentient. What that means is that they are able to experience both pain and pleasure. So these animals have feelings. Welfare is not just about some basic issues in terms of biological functioning for them, but they are able to experience this range of different experiences and the environment that they are in can have profound effects on them. The treatment that we put them through has profound effects on their welfare. It is really clear that that sentience is something that the public fully understand. That means that all of these species, from companion animals to farmed animals, need to be able to experience a good life.

**Katherine COPSEY:** Thank you. Yes, there is a match between those in the Australian public who view common mammals and birds as sentient, eight out of 10, and the number that believe that pigs in particular are sentient, which is 80 per cent. Have you done any work on the particular practices that are the subject of this committee's terms of reference and that you mentioned earlier around current standards of regulation in relation to pig farming and public views?

**Bidda JONES:** We have not conducted any specific research on that, but it is worth saying that there is a match between public views around sentience and what animals can experience and the science that tells us what these animals can experience. Our concern, and this is really embedded in the scientific literature already, is that inflicting painful practices on sentient animals without pain relief should not be allowed to continue, particularly when there are available means of pain relief. There is clear evidence around that. Then probably the other area that is most pertinent to your terms of reference is the issue of confinement. Farming animals in a way where they cannot socially interact – turn around, move freely – has a profound impact on their welfare. So the use of any kind of stalls, farrowing crates, gestation stalls, boar stalls – all of these are severely restricting the movement of pigs and are therefore having significant negative welfare impacts.

**Katherine COPSEY:** Thank you.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** While we have not commissioned any research on those particular issues, there is certainly data that has been produced. I am aware of the RSPCA's periodic surveys that they do on community concerns around different animal welfare issues. Also, the department of agriculture commissioned a major study, in 2018, on Australian attitudes to farmed animal welfare. It also demonstrated the level of community concern around different practices, including within the pig industry, and those practices relating to extreme confinement and various bodily mutilations were two practices that the community was very concerned about.

**Katherine COPSEY:** Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Ms Copsey. Thank you very much for coming along today. We have obviously heard some questions from other committee members about the way that evidence of the treatment of animals on farms is captured. Does your organisation have a view on what farming industries or what the pig industry could do to be more transparent to stop this occurring in the first place?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Yes, it is a great question. There are certainly things that the industry itself could do. But I think this is more a question about what the responsible government regulators are doing, because at the end of the day the industry can very well be more transparent about its practices, but the public really wants to hear from an independent source of advice, an independent authority that does not have vested interests either way, whether they be vested interests around promoting and protecting the industry or vested interests around promoting and protecting animal welfare. Hence why we think it is really important to have an independent animal welfare authority, an independent office of animal welfare, established – to enhance transparency within not just the pig industry but all animal-based industries and to at least provide advice on the way to establish robust compliance-monitoring regimes that include unannounced inspections and reporting on those inspection regimes so that the community can have confidence that standards are being monitored, that standards are being checked, so that it is not something that requires or compels activists to take that upon themselves to go and investigate those issues.

**Bidda JONES:** One of the other things that can be done obviously – and this is something that is widely supported, and I think has been raised in many submissions – is the concept of mandatory CCTV in all



abattoirs, not just pig abattoirs but all abattoirs, and that should include inside areas where animals are being stunned so that it is captured in terms of the experience that those animals go through during the stunning process. And that CCTV, that mandated CCTV, should have third-party monitoring. That is a clear action that both the regulator and the industry could take. It is something that has been a requirement in a number of other countries, particularly throughout Europe. The Queensland government recently passed legislation requiring CCTV in all slaughter facilities, so it is something that can be carried out at the state level in Australia.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** And we acknowledge AMIC's – the Australian Meat Industry Council – announcement yesterday that they would require it as part of their industry QA scheme; however, we do think that that still needs to be reflected in both federal and state law as well. It is one thing for the industry's own QA scheme to require this, which is a very positive thing, and we congratulate AMIC for coming to the table on that, but that footage does need to be made available to state and federal regulators as well to monitor compliance. If the industry accepts that CCTV video surveillance is an effective compliance tool for monitoring standards of animal welfare, then that equally applies to allowing regulators access to that footage to monitor compliance as well.

**The CHAIR:** Wonderful. Thank you. Just on CO<sub>2</sub> as a form of stunning, has your organisation looked into alternatives that could be used for CO<sub>2</sub>? I guess if you could tell us a little bit more about your position on them.

**Bidda JONES:** Yes. I could go back a little bit in time about this, because 2014 was the first time that it was made abundantly clear to the industry the distress that is suffered by pigs during CO<sub>2</sub> stunning, and that was as a result of the first footage that was obtained of pigs inside the gas chambers. As a result of that a technical group came together. I was working for the RSPCA at the time. I was involved in this work. And the industry at the time started to look at the literature and to look at the factors that were affecting the welfare of pigs during CO<sub>2</sub> stunning. I strongly advised them also to look at what was happening in Europe and to start investing in alternatives. As a result of that there was no actual progress in terms of advancing alternatives to CO<sub>2</sub> in Australia. The research program that was instigated as a result of that footage was never fully completed, so I feel that there was a significant lost opportunity there in terms of what the Australian pig industry could have done to try and advance alternatives to CO<sub>2</sub>.

There have been multiple research projects overseas, and there is one underway at the moment. The European Union has committed to phasing out CO<sub>2</sub> stunning, and as part of that they are investing in research into alternative systems in Europe. I think the Australian industry should be partnering with the Europeans to invest in this too. It is a real concern to us that there is no investment despite the amount of funding that the industry receives through levy and matched funding and that there is no mention in their innovation plan of investing in alternatives to CO<sub>2</sub> stunning. The situation that we have at the moment is that there is no commercial alternative to CO<sub>2</sub> stunning available anywhere in the world that involves the use of gases. However, there are other methods available which involve electrical stunning, and those are currently the best alternative to CO<sub>2</sub> that is available.

**The CHAIR:** Wonderful. Thank you. That is my time up, so we will go to Mr Berger.

**John BERGER:** Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Jed and Bidda, for your appearance at today's hearing. I suppose my question is probably more directed to you, Bidda, given that you have just outlined some of those things from a global perspective. I am interested if you can outline what you consider to be global best practice in pig husbandry. Where do you think Victoria ranks alongside those practices?

**Bidda JONES:** That is a very broad question. In terms of the sorts of standards that have been developed in terms of any government, I would say that what the European Union's food standards authority have developed in their most recent reports would be best practice. They are certainly ahead of Australia in terms of where we stand currently on issues like confinement, pain relief and standards for slaughter, so I would be looking to the European Union for advice or for those sorts of standards. The science is certainly there that tells us what we should be doing. We are in a situation in Australia with standards where we are working with a code of practice that was introduced in 2008. The review process for that was supposed to start in 2017. It did start – there was a literature review written – and nothing has happened since. We have got a broken system in Australia when it comes to farmed animal welfare standards. We seem unable to progress more than one at a time despite there being a number of different farmed animals that are desperately in need of better standards. That is an issue primarily for the federal government, but all states and territories are involved in this process. Victoria certainly

could be acting to lead that process, could be offering to lead that process from a national point of view. The review of those standards could be expedited so that it could then start to reflect some of the things that we know should and really must change.

**John BERGER:** Thanks for that. I think that covers pig husbandry. What about pig abattoir systems? Where do you think we rank alongside global spaces?

**Bidda JONES:** Well, again, I mean, the majority of countries in the world use similar systems to Australia. The sort of takeover in terms of carbon dioxide stunning becoming the norm started in the States and then spread to Australia in the name of efficiency, I would say, and what we do in Australia probably is not very different to what happens in the US. The Europeans, again, as I said, are leading in this. They have recognised that there is no future for carbon dioxide stunning in pig slaughter, and they are investing in alternatives. I cannot give you a ranking, but we are all doing pretty badly is probably the short answer to this. We are failing pigs in terms of ensuring that the process of killing them is not distressing – not causing fear, pain or distress. That is what humane slaughter should be, and we are failing pigs every single day – millions of pigs – because we have not been investing in research and we have not been reviewing standards in the way that we should, and the industry itself has been burying its head in the sand over this for a couple of decades now.

**John BERGER:** Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Berger. Mr McIntosh.

**Tom McINTOSH:** Thanks, both, for attending. Just following on from that I suppose, whether it be husbandry or abattoirs, are there spaces where you think industry would like to go with further support, like improvements? I do not know what engagement you have had with industry and whether you think there are improvements you would like to make with further supports. Have you picked up on any of that?

**Bidda JONES:** There are certainly some segments of the industry that have been investing in new systems. For example, there is a lot of research in Australia around alternatives to traditional farrowing stalls. We commend those sectors of the industry that are working in that area and at least investing in the research. But without regulatory incentives we are not actually seeing the change across the industry in those areas, so I think there is a role here for deadlines for phasing out of different systems. That is the thing that is missing in terms of trying to get the sort of change that is needed. It is all very well investing in things, but if you do not actually have an incentive to end the use of systems that are inherently inhumane, then we do not see the sort of change that is needed to protect the welfare of pigs.

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** As you will no doubt hear directly from Australian Pork Limited, they have been calling for a review of the national standards for the welfare of pigs to take place for years now and for that review to include a regulated phase-out of sow stalls. As no doubt you will hear from them, they have made some progress with their voluntary phase-out of sow stalls, but there are quite a number of pigs still kept in sow stalls around the country. It requires regulation to bring them into line with the rest of the industry. The industry itself is calling out for this to occur. It is just, again, the lack of investment, the lack of leadership to get this done.

As an organisation we certainly support any assistance that governments can provide to industries to improve their animal welfare standards as a general principle, and that is a very popular policy as well. Whenever we do research around community attitudes to certain practices and the need for change, there will be a high level of agreement on the need to phase out certain harmful practices. But when you then add to the question ‘If farmers were supported with the transition away from sow stalls, battery cages’ or whatever the case may be, the level of support ratchets up another 10 per cent or so. Those people who are concerned about farmers in the process of that transition, if their concerns can be addressed by governments providing that assistance to farmers to make the transition, then it is really a win-win outcome, and the vast majority of the community support those measures.

**Tom McINTOSH:** Thank you. Thanks, both. Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr McIntosh.

Thank you very much, witnesses, for coming along today. I know that there are some other committee members that have follow-up questions, but we are out of time. Are you happy to take those on notice through the committee staff?

**Jed GOODFELLOW:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Wonderful, thank you. That concludes the hearing.

**Witnesses withdrew.**