

9 March 2023

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

Via email: [IGAWLAE@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:IGAWLAE@agriculture.gov.au)


### **Inspector-General of Animal Welfare Consultation Paper**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare (IGAW) Consultation Paper.

We represent six of Australia's leading animal protection organisations with a combined supporter base of over 2 million Australians. Our members include Animals Australia, Humane Society International Australia, World Animal Protection Australia, FOUR PAWS Australia, Compassion in World Farming, and Voiceless, the animal protection institute.

While we are pleased to see progress on the establishment of the IGAW, the model outlined in the consultation paper falls far short of our expectations. It fails to propose anything that is not already covered by the role and scope of the current Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports. The only substantive difference under the proposed model appears to be a change in name and for these reasons we do not believe it meets the Government's election commitment.

We strongly encourage the Government to review the proposed model with a view to enacting a more meaningful IGAW. Our submission proposes a number of options for achieving this.

We trust our attached submission will be of assistance in conveying our position on the proposed model. Should you require any clarification or further information, I can be contacted on 

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Jed Goodfellow**  
Co-Director  
Australian Alliance for Animals



## About the Australian Alliance for Animals

The Australian Alliance for Animals is a national charity leading a strategic alliance of Australia's key animal protection organisations to achieve systemic change for animals. Through our six core member organisations, we have a combined supporter base of over two million people.

Learn more about our work on our website: [www.allianceforanimals.org.au](http://www.allianceforanimals.org.au)

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*In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their enduring connections to land, sea and community. We pay respect to their Elders past and present.*

# Inspector-General of Animal Welfare Consultation Paper

9 March 2023

## 1. Introduction

During the 2022 Federal Election, the Australian Labor Party committed to establishing the “office of the independent Inspector-General for Animal Welfare” in recognition of Labor’s support for strong animal welfare standards and belief that all animals should be treated humanely.<sup>1</sup> The Government’s subsequent October Budget indicated that this would be delivered by simply “expanding the functions” of the current Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports (IGLAE). This was disappointing to the animal welfare sector as we understood Labor’s commitment to encompass the establishment of a *new* statutory office. Nevertheless, we remained open minded about the potential for achieving the outcome of expanding the functions of the IGLAE through the existing structure.

However, the model proposed in the consultation paper fails to achieve this. The proposed role and objectives for the new Inspector-General for Animal Welfare (IGAW) add nothing new to the role and objectives of the current IGLAE. Reviewing and reporting on the Department’s approval of regulated entities, detection of non-compliance, conduct of investigations, interaction with state territory enforcement agencies, and reporting on animal welfare breaches are all topics the current IGLAE has the power to review. The only substantive difference under the consultation paper’s proposed model appears to be the change in name.

We strongly encourage the Government to review this proposed model with a view to enacting more meaningful reform. At a time when Australia is facing increasing international pressure from trade partners to lift its animal welfare standards and strengthen its assurances, limiting the scope of the IGAW in such a way would be a missed opportunity.

Expanding the IGAW’s role to include oversight of animal welfare standards in all Commonwealth-regulated fields, including animal welfare standards at export abattoirs and the international trade in wildlife and wildlife products, and reporting on the implementation of national animal welfare standards, would be a far more meaningful reform. There is a great need for further consistency in the Australian Government’s approach to animal welfare policy,

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<sup>1</sup> A record of the Australian Labor Party’s election commitment can be found by downloading the party responses table available here: <https://www.allianceforanimals.org.au/federal-election-2022>

standards and regulatory functions across all portfolios. The benefits of the IGAW's role should not be siloed to one particular area of one portfolio.

Our submission outlines the expanded roles and responsibilities we believe are necessary for the IGAW reform to be considered meaningful. Expanding the IGAW functions in this way would deliver substantial long-term benefits via increasing the confidence of international trading partners and the Australian community in the Government's commitment to ensuring high standards of animal welfare.

While we acknowledge that this consultation process is limited to establishing the IGAW, this reform will only go part way to addressing the fundamental deficiencies in Australia's current animal welfare policy framework. The establishment of a national Animal Welfare Commission to provide national leadership in the development of Australia's animal welfare standards is urgently needed. For further information about this and related reforms, please see our report, *Building a Fairer Australia for Animals*, available at [www.fairgoforanimals.org.au](http://www.fairgoforanimals.org.au).

## 2. Role and objectives

The role and objectives proposed for the IGAW in the consultation paper are very limited and already covered by the scope of the current IGLAE's role and powers. Reviewing and reporting on the Department's approval of regulated entities, detection of non-compliance, conduct of investigations, interaction with state and territory enforcement agencies, and reporting on animal welfare breaches are all topics the current IGLAE has the power to review. It is important that the role of the new IGAW be expanded to encompass a broader range of regulatory activities as the Commonwealth's responsibilities for animal welfare are not limited to regulatory processes within live animal exports. The Commonwealth possesses ample constitutional authority for expanding its current role via multiple 'heads of power' including the 'trade and commerce', 'external affairs', and 'corporations' powers. Proposed expanded activities are outlined below.

### 2.1 Animal welfare standards at export abattoirs

The Australian Government maintains responsibility for animal welfare standards at export-registered abattoirs. Animal welfare at export abattoirs has been the subject of multiple notable incidents including the cruel treatment of dairy calves at Tasmanian Quality Meats,<sup>2</sup> and the poor handling and slaughter of horses at Meramist abattoir in Queensland.<sup>3</sup> In September 2022, 631 animal welfare incident reports over a two-year period involving 4,083 animals were tabled

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<sup>2</sup> Peta Carlyon, Tasmanian abattoir investigated over animal cruelty claims, *ABC News*, 14 October 2016 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-14/tasmanian-abattoir-accused-of-animal-cruelty/7924804>>

<sup>3</sup> Caro Meldrum-Hanna and Amy Donaldson, *The Final Race*, 7.30 ABC, 18 October 2019 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-18/slaughter-abuse-of-racehorses-undermines-industry-animal-welfare/11603834>>

in the Senate.<sup>4</sup> Such incidents have the potential to damage community and international trading partner confidence in Australia's standards of animal welfare.

The IGAW should play a key role in reviewing equivalent regulatory functions to those of live animal exports in the field of export abattoirs, including the Department's role in the approval of establishments, compliance activities, interaction with state and territory enforcement agencies, reporting on breaches, and the adequacy of underlining animal welfare standards. This would provide an important source of independent advice to the Government and provide the Australian community and international trading partners with an added layer of confidence in Australia's regulatory framework for animal welfare at export abattoirs.

The Commonwealth's potential role in regulating the welfare of animals involved in the export of meat could extend far beyond its current limited oversight of export-registered abattoirs. The Commonwealth should have oversight of welfare standards throughout the entire supply chain including on farm. The 'trade and commerce' and 'external affairs' powers provide sufficient scope for the Commonwealth to expand its oversight in this way.

## 2.2 International trade in wildlife and wildlife products

The Australian Government is also responsible for overseeing the international trade in wildlife and wildlife products under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, which includes the objective of promoting the humane treatment of wildlife (s.303BA), and additional animal welfare requirements under its associated regulations. Notable areas of wildlife trade covered by the Act include the trade in kangaroo and crocodile products. The IGAW should play a role in reviewing the animal welfare-related functions of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water in approving wildlife management plans and the adequacy of national standards underpinning wildlife trades.

This would provide a great value-adding service to the Department and the Minister for Environment as the Department is accustomed to assessing the ecological sustainability of wildlife imports and exports but does not currently possess specialist expertise in animal welfare. The IGAW's oversight could therefore provide substantial benefits to the Department and the Minister for Environment in improving its regulatory practice and ensuring compliance with international obligations. The IGAW's role should also encompass the review of the Department's approval of the export and import of live wildlife specimens under the Act.

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<sup>4</sup> Jamieson Murphy, 'Abhorrent' welfare report shows sick livestock sent to slaughter, *Canberra Times*, 19 September 2022, <<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7908801/abhorrent-welfare-report-shows-sick-livestock-sent-to-slaughter/>>

## 2.3 Reviewing the adequacy of animal welfare standards for live exports

As noted above, the current roles proposed for the new IGAW in reviewing regulatory processes within the live animal export trade are no different to those undertaken by the current IGLAE. To provide a meaningful difference to the current IGLAE, the new IGAW should also have responsibility for reviewing the adequacy of animal welfare standards underpinning the live export trade including the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) and the ESCAS animal welfare standards.

## 2.4 Reporting on the implementation of national animal welfare standards

There is currently no official government record of the progress for implementing the national standards and guidelines for animal welfare at the state and territory level. While domestic animal welfare standards may be primarily regulated by the states and territories, this does not prevent an IGAW from reporting on the progress for implementing the standards. This would be a logical role for the Australian Government to fulfil and could easily be included in the functions of the IGAW. It would not require the exercise of regulatory powers but simply the hosting of a website, reviewing the status of standards implementation in each jurisdiction, and publishing updates. This function would not require significant resources but would be of great benefit to industry and animal welfare stakeholders, trading partners, researchers, and interested members of the community.

# 3. Structure and expertise

The IGAW should be established as an independent statutory body via amendments to the *Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports Act 2019*. In keeping with the Labor Party's election commitment, the name of the Inspector-General should simply be the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare. Live animal exports should just be one of the activities falling within its scope. Amendments should also include additional objects under s.3 to reflect the expanded role and functions of the new IGAW as proposed above. The objects should also be amended to include an additional objective of ensuring the welfare of animals is protected and promoted in all areas of Commonwealth responsibility. Section 10 of the Act should also be amended to encompass the broader array of responsibilities for the new IGAW.

Staff appointed to the office of the IGAW must have animal welfare qualifications. A veterinary degree on its own is not a qualification in animal welfare nor is a degree in veterinary science the only pathway to an understanding of animal welfare science. Officers appointed to the office should have post-graduate qualifications in animal welfare science, law or policy, such as an MSc Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law, be a member of the Animal Welfare Chapter of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (MANZCVS (Animal Welfare)) or hold other higher degree research qualifications in animal welfare.