



SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

REVIEW OF THE *CLIMATE CHANGE ACT 2010* (VIC)

31 July 2015

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ABOUT VOICELESS

As an innovator, capacity builder and ideas-generator, Voiceless plays a leading role in the development of a cutting edge social justice movement, animal protection.

With a highly professional and well-educated team, Voiceless brings together like-minded compassionate Australians from the legal, academic, non-profit and education sectors to form strong and effective networks.

Voiceless believes in the provision of quality information, analysis and resources to inspire debate and discussion and to empower individuals and organisations to generate positive social change.

Voiceless is a non-profit Australian organisation established in May 2004 by father and daughter team Brian Sherman and Ondine Sherman.

To build and fortify the animal protection movement, Voiceless:

- gives grants to key projects which create the groundswell for social change;
- cultivates the animal law community through the provision of leadership, educational opportunities and resources; and
- raises awareness of animal protection issues within the education system in order to strengthen democratic skills, promote critical thinking and encourage advocacy amongst students.

PATRONS

J.M. COETZEE, Nobel Prize for Literature Winner 2003, author of 'Lives of Animals' and 'Elizabeth Costello'

BRIAN SHERMAN AM, businessman and philanthropist

DR JANE GOODALL, world-renowned primatologist and animal advocate

THE HON MICHAEL KIRBY AC CMG, former judge of the High Court of Australia

CHARLIE TEO, internationally acclaimed neurosurgeon

AMBASSADORS

HUGO WEAVING, Actor: Oranges and Sunshine, Last Ride, Little Fish, Lord of the Rings Trilogy, Matrix Trilogy, The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert

EMILY BARCLAY, Actor: Prime Mover, Piece of my Heart, Suburban Mayhem, In My Father's Den

ABBIE CORNISH, Actor: w.e., Suckerpunch, Limitless, Bright Star, Stop Loss, Elizabeth: The Golden Age, A Good Year, Somersault, Candy

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Voiceless thanks the Independent Review Committee (**the Committee**) for inviting public comment on the review of the *Climate Change Act 2010* (Vic) (**the Act**).

Animal industries have been cited as a major factor in causing anthropogenic climate change.¹ Given our expertise on the factory farming of animals in Australia, Voiceless is in a position to comment on how the government's climate change response may be strengthened through consideration of the sustainability of current farming practices.

Voiceless recognises that action on climate change involves consideration of many industries and practices, but submits that intensive animal agriculture is one of the most pressing factors and must be addressed by the Victorian Government.

Voiceless respectfully submits the following recommendations:

1. Intensive animal agriculture must be acknowledged as a major contributor to climate change

The effectiveness of the Act and related policies in driving action will depend on the correct identification and direct acknowledgement of the key causes of climate change. A major known cause is intensive animal agriculture, with the livestock sector accounting for at least 18% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions, a higher percentage than that contributed by the transport sector.² Some studies suggest that livestock could actually account for up to 51% of emissions.³

These contributions are attributable to the high use of fertilisers and fossil fuels; manure management; and direct emissions from livestock (due to enteric fermentation in the digestive system of ruminants). Though intensive animal agriculture accounts for only 9 percent of global anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions, it contributes 35 to 40 percent of methane emissions and 65 percent of nitrous oxide emissions. Methane and nitrous oxide have significantly higher impacts on global warming than carbon dioxide: methane has 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide, while nitrous oxide is a staggering 300 times more harmful than carbon dioxide.⁴

Furthermore, intensive animal agriculture exacerbates the impacts of climate change through deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, salinisation, biodiversity loss and the pollution, acidification and overuse of water.⁵ For example, modern agriculture requires vast amounts of water: between 5,000 and 20,000 litres are needed to produce one kilogram of meat. By contrast, one kilogram of wheat requires between 500 and 4,000 litres.⁶ The dairy industry also uses significant water resources (about

¹ Harry Aiking, 'Food Security – What is New?' in Karen Soeters (ed.) *Meat the Future: How Cutting Meat Consumption Can Feed*

² Ibid.

³ Robert Goodland and Jeff Anhang, 'Livestock and Climate Change' (2009) 22(6) *World Watch Magazine* 10.

⁴ UNEP, 'Growing greenhouse gas emissions due to meat production' (2012) <http://www.unep.org/pdf/unep-geas_oct_2012.pdf>; Humane Society International, 'The Impact of Animal Agriculture on the Environment and Climate Change in Brazil' (undated) <http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/hsi-fa-white-papers/brazil_climate_change_factsheet.pdf>; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'Livestock impacts on the environment' (2006) <<http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0612sp1.htm>>.

⁵ World Future Council, 'How does agriculture contribute to climate change?' (undated) <<http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/2326.html>>.

⁶ Ami Sedghi, 'How Much Water is Needed to Produce Food and How Much Do We Waste?' *The Guardian* (online), 11 January 2013 <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/jan/10/how-much-water-food-production-waste#data>>.

19% of the 2,422 billion cubic metres of water that are used each year to make animal products).⁷ This level of usage is unsustainable considering the pressure on water supply that arises from climate change.

Voiceless submits that the Act, its associated Plan and any government policy or action must directly address the sustainability issues posed by intensive animal agriculture in Victoria.

2. The Victorian Government should play a role in public education on the issue of intensive animal agriculture

One purpose of the Act is 'to promote transparency and accountability by providing basic, accessible information to the Victorian community on climate change'.⁸ Voiceless recommends the Victorian Government could better fulfill this purpose by informing the public of the significant environmental impact of meat, dairy and other animal production in terms of their contribution to anthropogenic climate change. This could entail education programs which suggest ways to reduce animal meat and dairy intake for the sake of the environment.

This issue cannot be understated: the impact of our production and consumption habits on climate change will have severe consequences for future generations.⁹ A shift away from intensive animal agriculture towards higher production of plant protein is crucial for global food security.¹⁰

3. The Act and its associated Plan should incorporate mitigation methods with respect to factory farming

In order for the Victorian Government to fulfil its dual responsibility of reducing greenhouse gas emissions while also encouraging growth of a competitive economy, the Act needs to provide direct guidance for more sustainable methods of animal agriculture and, more importantly, encourage a move towards plant based agriculture. This will require a greater focus on mitigating the impact of existing factory farms, rather than a sole focus on future adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

Voiceless notes that adaptation is directly referred to in the Act and is the subject of the associated Climate Change Adaptation Plan, whereas mitigation is mentioned only once in the Preamble to the Act. Being equipped to adapt to the impacts of climate change is vital; it is equally important, however, to consider mitigation methods to curb current greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found evidence of 'substantial economic potential for

⁷ Arjen Hoekstra, 'The Meat Eater, A Big Water User' in Karen Soeters (ed.) *Meat the Future: How Cutting Meat Consumption Can Feed Billions More* (Nicolaas G. Pierson Foundation, 2015) 88.

⁸ *Climate Change Act 2010* (Vic) s 1(h).

⁹ Caroline Scott-Thomas, 'Changing Diets: Plant Protein Sustainability Crucial for Food Security', *Foodnavigator.com* (online), 21 January 2015 <<http://www.foodnavigator.com/Market-Trends/Changing-diets-Plant-protein-sustainability-crucial-for-food-security>>.

¹⁰ See, for example, Fredrik Hedenus, Stefan Wirsenius and Daniel Johansson, 'The importance of reduced meat and dairy consumption for meeting stringent climate change targets' (2014) 124(1-2) *Climate Change* 79; Li Day, 'Proteins from Land Plants – Potential Resources for Human Nutrition and Food Security' (2013) 32(1) *Trends in Food Science and Technology* 25. Furthermore, it is important to note that there is extensive scientific research to support the fact that a diet with less or no meat protein can be nutritionally adequate and may provide additional health benefits. See, for example, *ibid*; American Dietetic Association, 'Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets' (2009) *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 1266.

the mitigation of global GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions', which can only be fully realised through government policy.¹¹

There is therefore an onus on the Government to take mitigation action through development policies, planning regulations, tradable permits and financial incentives.¹² A step forward for the Victorian Government could be to amend the Act to incorporate such mitigation methods. Voiceless recommends that any approach include strict regulation and limitations on all livestock production, particularly factory farms, and a transition towards both more sustainable means of animal agriculture and alternatives to meat or dairy (plant-based protein). A movement towards more sustainable farming could help to establish the state of Victoria as a leader in addressing climate change.

Voiceless agrees with the Minister's comments that climate change is one of the most critical issues faced by modern society. As a polycentric issue, it demands a concerted and collaborative effort to ensure Victorians are better able to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

It is Voiceless's submission that an effective approach to climate change cannot be achieved unless the Victorian Government acknowledges, considers and mitigates the impact of intensive animal agriculture.

¹¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 'Adaptation and mitigation options', *IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007* (2007) <https://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/syr/en/spms4.html>.

¹² *Ibid.*