

RE: The discussion on Cage Egg production.

The current Australian Egg industry has approximately **20,000,000** layer hens housed (Commercial & Backyard) in the different segments – Cage, Barn Laid (Cage Free) and Free Range (Including Organic's).

Each Hen laying production system has its own animal welfare benefits for that system which are all well documented and will also be debated.

An estimated 60 percent (**12,500,000**) of the nation's hens are currently housed in Cage production facilities which produce around **68,500,000** cage table eggs per week to feed and provide Australian consumers with a high source of protein at a low cost.

Protein is an important component of every cell in the body. Hair and nails are mostly made of **protein**. Your body uses **protein** to build and repair tissues. You also use **protein** to make enzymes, hormones, and other body chemicals.

The Australian population is currently growing at a rate of 1.5% yearly which is about 350,000 people per year, the extra population will consume an additional **78,000,000** eggs this year (2017) growing to around **87,500,000** additional eggs by 2025.

Current Average Egg Supermarket sell price per egg. – Cage 700g = \$ 0.25c per egg, Barn Laid/Cage Free 700g = \$ 0.30c per egg, Free Range 700g = \$ 0.35c per egg.

As in any market the under supply or oversupply of a product normally dictates the selling price of that product, the removal of 60% of production would have a major impact on the availability of Eggs in the market and an influence on the cost /sell price to consumers.

An undersupply could have a flow on effect to consumers not only in Supermarkets but also in the Out of Home markets with increased pricing, an estimated increase on the sell pricing could be up to double or triple the current average price..

The changeover of sheds from the Cage system to Barn Laid / Cage Free or Free Range system is not a simple or cheap task, in most cases changing cage sheds to Barn Laid sheds require new modern equipment which can be up to \$ 1,500,000 depending on the shed size to purchase and install, this is without the cost of removing the existing cages or if necessary having to build a new shed. The sheds then only hold around half the number of Cage Free layer hens versus the original cage shed.

Cage production also produces the base egg pulp product for the production of numerous foods.

The Cage production system also produces a large proportion of the chicken manure which is used to fertilize soil to grow healthy crops to feed the nation, (Natural Chicken manure is one of the only safe manures which can be spread on fields.)

The Barn Laid/ Cage Free and Free Range production systems do not produce as much regular available chicken manure as a proportion is retained in the shed or on the Free Range fields, the reduction of available chicken manure for fertilizer could be a cause of poorer production and available produce for the market.

The decision on what to do with Cage Egg production needs to be carefully thought through as an irrational decision could cause a long term effect on the farms with downturn in employment the economy and even consumers health through the lack of reduced protein in the diet due to higher prices.

Overall, there are around 5,700,000 consumers weekly who buy and consume Cage produced eggs, 100,000 signatures of protest do not come close to the number of people who support the continued production of caged eggs at checkouts, takeaways or other outlets..

Yours Sincerely