

# 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



Tuesday, 20 October 2020

## HAVE YOUR SAY ON A NEW ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

Victorians have the chance to help improve animal welfare in Victoria by shaping new legislation, with a Directions Paper setting out key proposals and options for a new Animal Welfare Act now available for public comment.

Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes today encouraged Victorians to have their say on the options for the new laws, which will help keep a high standard of animal welfare and support Victorian farmers to maintain access to important export markets.

A new Act will deliver on the Government's election commitment to replace the current *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* – which is more than 30 years old.

The Directions Paper sets out several proposals for the new Act which aim to strengthen Victoria's reputation as a humane and responsible producer of food, and to maintain public confidence in our agriculture industry, research institutions, and many other animal sectors.

Among the proposals put forward for comment are setting minimum standards of care people must provide for animals. This would mean people caring for animals must meet basic needs of the animal – such as providing adequate food and water, and veterinary treatment for an injury or illness – rather than simply outlawing cruelty.

Other options being considered are how best to deliver on the Government's commitment to recognise animal sentience – meaning they feel pleasure, comfort, discomfort, fear and pain – in the legislation and how to ensure regulators are better able to drive behavioural change, monitor compliance, and undertake enforcement.

This would further protect the welfare of animals, with penalties better aligned with the seriousness of the offence and authorised officers able to better ensure animal carers are doing the right thing. Recognising animal sentience would also bring Victoria in line with other Australian and international jurisdictions.

The Directions Paper was developed following extensive consultation with key industry and community stakeholders about our existing laws and opportunities for improvement.

The Government has already made reforms to improve animal welfare including mandatory pain relief when mulesing sheep, regulating appropriate fruit tree netting to protect wildlife and introducing the Pet Exchange Register to improve the traceability of cats and dogs.

The Government is also investing \$3 million to support not-for-profit and community vet clinics, animal shelters and foster carers to purchase equipment and improve their services.

The Directions Paper and survey on the proposals for the new Act are available at [engage.vic.gov.au](https://engage.vic.gov.au). The survey closes on Monday 14 December 2020.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

*“Victorians love their animals – that’s why we are encouraging people to provide their feedback and shape new legislation that will help make sure people treat animals humanely.”*

*“Right now, animal welfare obligations are spread through multiple Acts, regulations, several national Standards and Guidelines and almost 30 codes of practice – our new laws will simplify the rules, and help those doing the right thing demonstrate their high standard of care for animals.”*

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