

**Archived:** Monday, 17 April 2023 12:19:17 PM  
**From:** s 47F  
**Mail received time:** Mon, 13 Feb 2023 02:13:16  
**Sent:** Mon, 13 Feb 2023 02:12:23

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

**Cc:** s 47F

**Subject:** FYI: RSPCA concerns about the cessation of Agricultural Census and Agricultural Commodities Survey results [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

**Importance:** Normal

**Sensitivity:** None

**Attachments:**

[2023-02-10 RSPCA Au to Dr Chalmers re ABS data on Australian agriculture.pdf](#)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Dear

I hope you had a lovely weekend. A quick heads-up FYI on the correspondence that RSPCA has emailed to the Treasurer today from our CEO, Richard Mussell (attached). This relates to our concerns around the government’s decision to cease the ABS’ provision of Australia’s five-yearly Agricultural Census and Agricultural Commodities results, which I understand s 47F flagged with you in your meeting earlier this month. You may recall that this matter was also flagged in our Pre-Budget Submission of the Senator of Murray Watt.

We welcome any questions and can pick-up in this matter in our next scheduled meeting.

Kind regards

s 47F

**Senior Policy Officer**  
RSPCA Australia



W [www.rspca.org.au](http://www.rspca.org.au)

s 47F

s 47F

A PO Box 265, Deakin West ACT 2600 Australia



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13 February 2023

Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP  
Treasurer

By email: [jim.chalmers@treasury.gov.au](mailto:jim.chalmers@treasury.gov.au)

Dear Dr Chalmers

I write to request a meeting to discuss RSPCA Australia's concerns about the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) intention to cease its five-year Agricultural Census and Agricultural Commodities Survey results. In the absence of an independent statutory agency for animal welfare to oversee animal-use industries, the ABS' legislated independence<sup>1</sup> and responsibility to inform public policy and deliver relevant, trusted and objective data, statistics and insights on the use of animals in Australia is crucial.

The RSPCA is Australia's most trusted animal welfare charity. We have worked with regulators, governments, industry and the community for more than 150 years to improve animal welfare. We are an evidence-based organisation that advocates for improved animal welfare and policy change based on animal welfare science and robust data.

We are pleased that the Labor Government is demonstrating national leadership in animal welfare. In particular, its commitment to phase out live sheep export, proposed establishment of an Inspector General of Animal Welfare and intention to re-establish an Animal Welfare Strategy. Significant focus is required to improve animal welfare, and ensure that Australian standards reflect contemporary animal welfare science as well as domestic and international community expectations.

The government-commissioned report by Futureye (2018) highlights that Australians are concerned about animal welfare and see the Federal Government as responsible for protecting animals through effective public policy.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 98% of Australians consider animal welfare important and 80% support more government action to improve animal welfare.<sup>3</sup> In our own *Public Perception Report* last year, 78% of respondents indicated that animal welfare is extremely or very important. We also note that this level of importance has increased since 2018.<sup>4</sup>

Animal welfare is an increasingly important factor for industry sustainability, and Australia's international trade and reputation. However, there is an unacceptable lack of independent, timely and objective data on Australia's animal use industries, including animal agriculture. To date, the ABS' animal production statistics have been the only source of independent data with the five-yearly census data in particular, providing important information on specific production systems, e.g. egg production, and specific practices, e.g. around lamb marking. The annual ABS statistics and the five-yearly census data, while limited, are critical to measuring some markers for animal welfare improvements over time.

Therefore, the recent decision to cease the collection and reporting of animal agricultural data is deeply flawed. We are concerned that the decision fails to reflect the

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975

<sup>2</sup> Futureye (2018). *Commodity or Sentient Being? Australia's Shifting Mindset on Farm Animal Welfare*.

<sup>3</sup> Roy Morgan Research (2022). *Attitudes to Animal Welfare*.

<sup>4</sup> McCrindle (2022). *RSPCA Australia's Public Perception Report*.





government's intention to improve animal welfare, and the community's expectations that it will do so. It also exposes Australia's international reputation to further criticism and risks the long-term sustainability of animal agriculture. Specifically, the decision fails to reflect some of the requirements outlined in the ABS' *Statement of Expectations*.<sup>5</sup> That is, it undermines the requirements to:

1. effectively provide key statistics and use of data; and
2. engage with stakeholders.

While we understand part of the rationale behind the decision was the lack of industry engagement,<sup>6</sup> the RSPCA believes the government should be strongly encouraging, if not regulating, the requirement for animal use industries to provide data. Industry transparency and accountability is arguably more important today than ever, given the increasing concern and awareness of animal welfare. Animal-use industries' social licence depends on this.

The RSPCA advocates for increased independent data collection and reporting on animal use industries. There is significant need for greater transparency, timeliness and objectivity in the provision of animal use data in Australia given the primary sources of data are peak industry bodies and rural research and development corporations. Data collection and reporting must not be left to industries whose primary objectives are commercial because animal welfare will be subordinate and impossible to measure or improve overtime. (We note the meat and livestock industry's alleged overestimate of Australia's beef cattle herd.<sup>7</sup>)

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet to discuss this issue and how the RSPCA can be part of the solution. We invite your office to contact s 47F(1) our Senior Policy Officer, at s 47F(1) to arrange a meeting time at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Mussell'.

Richard Mussell  
Chief Executive Officer  
RSPCA Australia

cc by email:

Dr Steven Kennedy, Secretary to the Treasury  
Dr David Gruen, ABS Australian Statistician  
s 47F(1) ABS Director Agricultural Statistics Program  
Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry  
Mr Andrew Metcalfe AO, Secretary to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry

<sup>5</sup> ABS *Statement of Expectations* (pg 3), accessed [online](#) January 2023.

<sup>6</sup> ABS website, Agricultural Commodities Australia page, accessed January 2023.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/agriculture/agricultural-commodities-australia/latest-release#changes-in-this-and-forthcoming-issues>

<sup>7</sup> Condon, J. *Beef Central* article, '[MLA herd estimate may be three million heavy, says analyst.](#)' Wednesday 8 February 2023.

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**Archived:** Monday, 17 April 2023 12:22:04 PM  
**From:** s 47F(1)  
**Mail received time:** Wed, 1 Mar 2023 01:47:35  
**Sent:** Wed, 1 Mar 2023 01:47:15  
**To:** s 22(1)(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** RE: HSI Budget Submission [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]  
**Importance:** Normal  
**Sensitivity:** None

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Hi

No problem, completely understand things are unpredictable in ministers' offices! I am available and flexible next week but on leave the following. Back at work on 21 March.

Looking forward to catching up soon.

Best wishes



s 47F(1)

Head of Campaigns

A: Garigal Country, PO Box 439, Avalon NSW 2107

s 47F(1)



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**From:** s 22(1)(a)(ii) >  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 28 February 2023 6:42 PM  
**To:** s 47F(1)  
**Subject:** RE: HSI Budget Submission [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hi s 47F(1)

Really sorry to do this, I'm now travelling on Thursday and Friday and will no longer be available to meet on Thursday afternoon.

I'll be in touch next week to reschedule.

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Thanks,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Senior Advisor

Office of Senator Murray Watt | Labor Senator for Queensland  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Minister for Emergency Management

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

*I SUPPORT A*  
**VOICE** *to* **Parliament**

*of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians*

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**From:** s 22(1)(a)(ii)

**Sent:** Friday, 3 February 2023 2:33 PM

**To:** s 47F(1)

**Subject:** RE: HSI Budget Submission [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hi s 47F(1)

Please see Team link below!

Speak soon.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s 47E(d)

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**From:** s 47F(1)

Sent: Friday, 3 February 2023 1:31 PM

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To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: RE: HSI Budget Submission [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)

It would be really great to have a meeting with you and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 4.15 works well. Would you like me to send a calendar invite?

Thank you

s 47F(1)

Head of Campaigns  
HSI Australia

s 47F(1)

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From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent: Friday, 3 February 2023 11:11 AM

To: s 47F(1)

Subject: RE: HSI Budget Submission [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hi s 47F(1)

Thank you for your time yesterday and for sending through the additional information.

I will forward your request onto the Minister's EA, s 47F(1) and she will be in touch to advise on the minister's availability. In the interim, I would welcome the opportunity for us to meet. Do the below details work for you?

**Date: Thursday, 2 March**

**Time: 4:15pm**

**Location: MS Teams**

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

| Senior Advisor

Office of Senator Murray Watt | Labor Senator for Queensland  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Minister for Emergency Management

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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From: s 47F(1)

Sent: Thursday, 2 February 2023 5:36 PM

To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: HSI Budget Submission [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Dear s 22(1)(a)(ii)

It was really nice to meet you on the Zoom call with the Minister today. Please pass on HSI's thanks to the Minister, I

thought it was a great conversation. I thought I would follow up by sending through HSI's submission to the budget process which addresses some of the points made on the call. Page 8 of 14

I know the Minister has been dealing with a series of national disasters and so HSI hasn't pushed for a bilateral meeting. However, we would love to get something in the diary in the next little while if we can? Once he has had time to consider what was raised today, we would love to talk more about the opportunities for Commonwealth leadership on standards and guideline processes and to also dig a little more into the mulesing issue in particular.

Thanks



s 47F(1)

Head of Campaigns

A: Garigal Country, PO Box 439, Avalon NSW 2107

s 47F(1)



*We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We recognise and respect the enduring relationship they have with their lands and waters, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.*

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**Archived:** Monday, 17 April 2023 12:22:18 PM  
**From:** s 47F  
**Mail received time:** Tue, 28 Feb 2023 08:13:10  
**Sent:** Tue, 28 Feb 2023 08:12:59  
**To:** s 22(1)(a)( s 47F  
**Subject:** RE: Reschedule meeting with MO [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Importance:** Normal  
**Sensitivity:** None

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Hi s 22(1)(a)

No troubles – let us know when works for you.

Regards

s 47F

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**From:** s 22(1)(a)(ii)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 28 February 2023 6:41 PM  
**To:** s 47F  
**Subject:** Reschedule meeting with MO [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s 47F ,

Really sorry to do this, but I am now travelling on Thursday and Friday and won't be able to do our meeting on Thursday afternoon.

I'll be in touch next week to reschedule.

Thanks,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii) Senior Advisor

Office of Senator Murray Watt | Labor Senator for Queensland  
 Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
 Minister for Emergency Management

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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**VOICE to Parliament**

*of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians*

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Thu, 2 Mar at 12:39 pm

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Hi <sup>s 47F(1)</sup> just touching base with all the noise on live sheep overnight. Will the RSPCA be putting out comment?

Hi <sup>s 22(1)(a)(ii)</sup> - not at this stage we were hopeful to hear about the consultation process being announced and then we have some positive comments ready to go

Thanks <sup>s 47F(1)</sup> Will be in touch later today re the status of the consultation.

Thu, 2 Mar at 6:40 pm

Hi <sup>s 22(1)(a)(ii)</sup> we have received an invite for information about the consultation process but it says 9pm tonight - is that correct or a typo?

Hi <sup>s 47F(1)</sup> not a typo. Hope you can make it!

Thanks <sup>s 22(1)(a)(ii)</sup> we will be there

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Hi <sup>s 22(1)(a)</sup><sub>ii)</sub> since all is out in the media we are thinking of sending our media release this morning just reflecting what is already out there without much specifics - checking in there are no issues with that?



No issue from our end. Thanks for checking in

Do you mind letting me know once the statement is out?

Will do / any moment I think

Awesome. Thanks <sup>s 47F(1)</sup>

Has been sent

Got it! Thanks

Do you mind tweeting the statement so we can retweet?

Yes our comms team will do

Thank you



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#RSPCAMedia: Live sheep export  
phase out one step closer with panel  
announcement

<https://t.co/OgKgr96Y1L>



**RSPCA Australia**

twitter.com

Fri, 3 Mar at 12:49 pm

Can we please get someone from the  
RSPCA to ask a Q or make a  
statement?

Minister Watt Briefing – Phase out of Live Sheep Exports by Sea [SEC=UNOFFICIAL] - Meeting

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Minister Watt Briefing – Phase out of Live Sheep Exports by Sea [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

s 22  
(1)(a)(ii) Required s 47F

Optional

forwarded

As the meeting organizer, you do not need to respond to the meeting.

Friday, 3 March 2023 12:30 PM-1:15 PM Microsoft Teams Meeting

Please join Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for a briefing on the Australian Government’s commitment to phase out live sheep exports by sea.

s 47E(d)