

MEDIA RELEASE:**26 February 2018****TEMPORARY CAP ON CAGES AS FARMERS REVAMP COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Egg Farmers of Australia (EFA) today lodged its submission to Animal Health Australia's *Draft Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (Poultry)* supporting the standards and guidelines as proposed while also supporting a temporarily regulated cap on current conventional cage farming and releasing its first *Animal Welfare Policy Statement*.

EFA CEO John Dunn said the decision to support a regulated cap being placed on conventional cages was made in response to community feedback over the past 90 days.

"We understand that there is community interest and concern about cage egg production and accept that it must be acknowledged," said Mr Dunn.

"We hear public concern but we know we can change minds if we better engage.

"When people see what we do and understand why, attitudes change – we know this from the engagement program we've been running which has involved opening our farms to community members to show and explain what we do.

"The vast majority of those who have toured a farm with EFA have expressed confidence in modern cage egg farming.

"But we can't ignore the elephant in the room – with Animal Health Australia receiving 100,000 emails opposing cage farming, it's clear these wounds will take time to address and heal. Our support for a regulatory cap shows we're committed to listening and engaging.

Until we can expand our engagement and give the public confidence in what we do, farmers will accept a temporary restriction on the construction of new conventional cages as part of this process."

Mr Dunn said the EFA submission also includes a new *Animal Welfare Policy Statement* which has been developed in response to feedback from the organisation's community engagement program.

"We believe Option C provides wholesale reform and a net community benefit, however we recognise from the number of responses to this process that many people would not understand why this is so," said Mr Dunn.

"Regrettably, egg farmers have been reluctant to open their farms because the level of concern expressed has been so personal.

"Only one side of the story has been presented and people have formed views without having all the information or the important perspective of the farmer.

"Our *Animal Welfare Policy Statement* articulates what animal welfare means to egg farmers and how they deliver on that commitment in the way they farm.

"It is our hope that this, in conjunction with our community engagement program, will go some way towards helping our industry tell our story about farming."



The policy addresses EFA's position on animal welfare in relation to farming practices, animal welfare science, community consultation and education, animal protection legislation, enforcement and compliance, and consumer choice.

Mr Dunn said he hoped these commitments would give the community more confidence in the industry which produces 100 million eggs each week and contributes \$1.8 billion to the economy annually.

"We are listening to concerns; we are improving sustainably, and we want to continue giving consumers the choice to buy the egg that's right for them.

ENDS

Note to editors: The Egg Farmers of Australia community engagement program has involved farm tours in Victoria and Western Australia, presentations from independent experts in the veterinarian and animal welfare sciences, and third-party facilitated discussions and workshops to hear community concerns, feedback and ideas on how the industry can improve.

Egg Farmers of Australia is committed to further developing this program into a nation-wide process and continues to examine how biosecurity can be managed to allow farm tours to be done on a more permanent basis.

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