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## FACING THE ANIMAL WELFARE REALITY

"These days when it comes to how our food is produced, the question should not be "how much do you know about where it comes from?" but, "how much do you *want* to know?"

That's an ethic Australia's pork farmers fully support.

Pig producers around Australia are happy to answer that question, because they are rightly proud of the world-beating standards they have established for their industry, at their own expense – no rent-seeking, no subsidies, no crying poor – to differentiate themselves and their products from imported pork goods from markets where animal welfare is less stringently implemented than here in Australia.

The Australian pork industry invests millions of dollars each year into researching best practice of animal welfare management to better care, focusing on both the mother pig and her offspring.

Piglet protection pens, for instance, do not create "suffering" for sows "unable to tend to their newborn babies" as has been claimed by activists.

Rather, the expert judgement across 31 independent studies is that short spells in farrowing stalls dramatically reduce piglet mortality from "layovers".

A 'layover' is the smothering of piglets by the sow, which is far more common in loose housing or free range production systems.

As an industry we are continually improving, because healthy pigs means better products for consumers, which – yes – means better profits along the supply chain.

Australia's pork producers are nearing the final expenditure of a \$50 million investment of their own money to phase out sow stalls by 2017, rapidly outpacing our European and North American competition.

Animal activists have every right to express their opinions. We want to hear them, but the search for truth and fact cuts both ways.

The claim that our industry has lobbied for the introduction of 'ag-gag' laws in Australia is fanciful and completely untrue.

We believe if consumers want to know how we produce pigs they have a right to know.

Our producers are seeking ways to further open up their operations to the scrutiny of the community. The issue and the biggest challenge in doing that is ensuring biosecurity regimes are maintained – for the benefit and welfare of the pigs themselves.

On that biosecurity note, every time animal activists invade a pig farm their actions compromise the health of pigs. That's hardly good for animal welfare.

The *Lucent* documentary, is anything but its claimed "everyday reality" of pig farming.

Rather it is an edited, subjective discourse from opponents running an orchestrated campaign to end animal farming for meat consumption.

If video vision from farm invasions is captured to improve the welfare of animals, why is this vision shared on social media months or years later – and not immediately provided to relevant authorities?

Australian pork producers work with the appropriate regulatory and welfare groups like the RSPCA as well as robust on-farm quality assurance schemes such as APIQ✓<sup>®</sup> to meet – and continually improve – acceptable standards for animal welfare, management, food safety and biosecurity.

The story of Australian pork producers is rarely heard and commonly misunderstood.

Fortunately Australian's are voting with their wallets acknowledging pig farmers achievements, expertise and accountability, and buying more Australian pork.

And if you want to know where food comes from and how it is produced, we'll be happy to oblige as best we can.

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