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Mediating Legal Reform: Animal Law, Livestock Welfare and Public Pressure

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Abstract

Legal protection of animal welfare in Australia is problematic with livestock (defined here as all animals farmed for use and profit, including poultry and aquatic animals) being effectively excluded from the majority of animal protection statutes. Such legal exclusions, joined with the inherent challenges of legal reform in this field – significant issues to do with standing, costs bearing and jurisdiction – have increased the difficulties of successful litigation. Despite explicit recognition of the necessity for reform in Australian animal law – in 2008 the Australian Law Reform Commission journal, *Reform*, took as its subject the ‘next great social justice movement’ of animal welfare and animal rights – a number of legal strategies for reform have been summed up by the Principal Solicitor for the Pro Bono Animal Law Service (PALS), the national legal referral service for animal law operating between 2009 and 2013, as having been exhausted. Specifically, the challenges of standing and costs bearing have meant that many meritorious animal welfare matters have not been able to be pursued within the legal domain. Alternative strategies for the achievement of legal reform in this field are thus required, and at this point in the history of the Australian animal welfare movement, one significant strategy is arguably emerging: that of strategically using social media to develop public interest in these issues and to focus this interest into effective pressure in the political, social and industry domains. This paper thus carries out an analysis of this development and focusing of pressure by animal welfare organisations through their use of social media, specifically considering a) the social media strategies utilised by such peak animal welfare bodies as Animals Australia and Voiceless, and b) the recently released Animal Effect smartphone app. More generally, this is a paper outlining and analysing the architecture of social media and public pressure being conjoined in the service of the livestock law reform movement. This paper is part of a larger project in which we record and analyse how animal welfare issues are conceived, articulated and argued within the public domain.

Keywords: Ethics and law; Animals Australia; livestock welfare

Mediating Legal Reform: Animal Law, Livestock Welfare and Public Pressure

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Introduction

Legal protection of animal welfare in Australia is problematic with livestock (defined here as all animals farmed for use and profit, including poultry and aquatic animals) being effectively excluded from the majority of animal protection statutes. Such legal exclusions, joined with the inherent challenges of legal reform in this field – significant issues to do with standing, costs bearing and jurisdiction – have increased the difficulties of successful litigation. Despite explicit recognition of the necessity for reform in Australian animal law – in 2008 the Australian Law Reform Commission journal, *Reform*, described animal welfare and animal rights as the ‘next great social justice movement’ – a number of legal strategies for reform have been summed up by the Principal Solicitor for the Pro Bono Animal Law Service (PALS), the national legal referral service for animal law operating between 2009 and 2013, as having been exhausted. Specifically, the challenges of standing and costs bearing have meant that many meritorious animal welfare matters have not been able to be pursued within the legal domain.

Alternative strategies for the achievement of legal reform in this field are thus required, and at this point in the history of the Australian animal welfare movement, one significant strategy is arguably emerging: that of strategically using social media to develop public interest in these issues and to focus this interest into effective pressure in the political, social and industry domains. This paper thus carries out an analysis of this development and focusing of pressure by animal welfare organisations through their use of social media, specifically considering a) the social media strategies utilised by such peak animal welfare bodies as Animals Australia and Voiceless, and b) the recently released Animal Effect smartphone app. More generally, this is a paper outlining and analysing the architecture of social media and public pressure being conjoined in the service of the livestock law reform movement.

Protecting Livestock Welfare in Australia

Livestock welfare in Australia is a contested issue engaging standpoints and stakeholders representing multiple perspectives: animal protectionist and liberationist, economic, agricultural/industrial, cultural and legal. The specific balance given to these interests further varies between Australia’s states and territories. It is inarguable however that current practice gives the most weight to the industry’s Model Codes of Practice

for the Welfare of Animals that are commissioned by the Primary Industries Standing Committee and endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. Varying across the states and territories, these codes are best described as sets of guidelines detailing minimum (rather than ‘best’) standards, and which are furthermore neither compulsory nor practically enforceable. This model has come under increasing pressure from animal advocates and activists who have argued that there is an inherent conflict of interests between welfare and production, and that livestock animals, as sentient beings, should have their welfare requirements properly recognised and protected. There is also increasing recognition that, despite the existing network of statutes and codes, Australia’s current laws ‘fail to provide meaningful protections to farm animals’ (Sharman 2009, p. 36; Bagaric & Akers 2012).

Although law reform is generally recognised as one of the most effective mechanisms for achieving change, such a strategy does face multiple challenges. Because livestock animals are legally property or stock within Australia, with no rights to bodily integrity or liberty, and because the presence of exemptions and industry-friendly Codes of Practice ensure that they spend their lives largely beyond the protective reach of other state and territory animal welfare statutes, arguments for their protection and/or for legal reform have to come from animal advocates, animal protection bodies, or other interested citizens who can satisfy standing and cost-bearing requirements. The preconditions, however, for being granted standing to sue, for example, are vague and often difficult to satisfy (Bagaric & Akers 2012). For instance, one precondition refers to the need to demonstrate that an instance of animal cruelty, if it does not show an applicant’s private rights to be at stake, is nevertheless of ‘special interest’ to the applicant. One of the most quoted definitions of such ‘special interest’ describes it as:

not mean[ing] a mere *intellectual or emotional* concern. A person is not interested within the meaning of the rule, unless he is likely gain some advantage, other than the satisfaction of righting a wrong, upholding a principle or winning a contest, if his action succeeds or to suffer some disadvantage, other than a sense of grievance or a debt for costs, if his action fails. A belief, however strongly felt, that the law generally, or a particular law, should be observed, or that conduct of a particular kind should be prevented, does not suffice to give its possessor locus standi. If that were not so, the rule requiring special interest would be meaningless.

Since this definition, delivered in *Australian Conservation Foundation v Commonwealth* (1980) 146 CLR 493 at 530, Australian courts have given different interpretations of ‘special interest’. Bagaric and Akers (2012) detail some of these: applicants must have a special interest greater than that of other members of the

public; applicants must demonstrate damage to property rights, social or political interests, or actual or apprehended injury; there must be a close proximity between the plaintiff and the subject matter. Furthermore, as Bagaric and Akers continue, different courts have reached opposing views regarding various interpretations. It has thus generally been difficult for an individual or group to argue special interest where the interests sought to be protected are those of animals.

Regardless of these difficulties, legal reform for the protection of livestock animals is being sought utilising a number of strategies, primarily that of strategic litigation. This work is supported in a number of ways: a) through the work of legal and political organisations explicitly formed to promote and act for animal law reform, including the Pro Bono Animal Law Service (discontinued in 2013), Lawyers for Animals, Barristers Animal Welfare Panel, and the Animal Justice Party; b) major national law firms conducting pro-bono work relating to animal welfare; c) the establishing and normalising of animal law as a discipline at fourteen Australian law schools; and d) evidential provision through work carried out by animal activists and animal advocacy groups (Glasgow 2008; Buttner 2007). It is however important to note that law reform does not occur in a vacuum; reform is rather typically responsive to shifts in community sentiment. Laws are hence normally broadly in line with community attitudes and values, rather than their shaper. This suggests that to have the best chance of success, proposed legal reform would need to be supported by a broad community base (Savory 2004; Bagaric & Akers 2012; Glasgow 2008) and would need to be framed and recognised as being in the public interest. Recognition of this point arguably informs the strategies and work of peak animal welfare and advocacy organisations such as Animals Australia and Voiceless.

Effective Animal Advocacy

Animal activism has gained a reputation for extremism with some activist groups engaging in more or less serious acts of unlawfulness to promote their cause. Such acts have included trespass, damage to public and private property, the infliction of mental or physical injury on participants in animal cruelty (or on their families), and economic sabotage (Bagaric & Akers 2012). Animal activist groups have also shown a tendency to utilise shocking and jarring visuals designed to generate ‘such a sense of outrage in people that they become inclined toward political action’ (Jasper & Poulsen 1995, p. 498; cf. Jasper & Nelkin 1992). Such a use of visual material – typically of helpless, vulnerable and suffering animals – aims to generate moral shock, empathic response and political action (Jasper & Poulsen 1995; Munro 2005; Nabi 2009; Wrenn 2013). None of these strategies are failsafe in bringing about change. Unlawful acts, even if considered to be morally justifiable by some, may cause a public opinion backlash; jarring and shocking

visual strategies may similarly fail to mobilise the community. As Mika writes regarding campaigns for animal rights mobilisation focused around promoting vegetarianism:

[W]hen one is confronted with personal and aggressive attacks condemning meat consumption, it is one's own behavior being condemned: the enemy is thyself. ... Thus, it could be that moral shock campaigns are ineffective when promoting vegetarianism, because condemning meat consumption (as opposed to other violations of animal rights) inevitably forces people to confront their own behavior (as opposed to that of others), and they are less likely to join a cause that requires them to make fundamental changes in what is such a deeply ingrained lifestyle. (Mika 2006, p. 932; Joy 2008)

Also examining this issue, Jasper (1998) argues that if the emotional reaction to moral shocks involves a need to change personal behaviour, feelings of dread or of being overwhelmed can paralyse mobilisation. Bagaric and Akers (2012) note that another possible reason for a lack of community mobilisation may be that animal advocates are calling for too ambitious a change too fast.

There are two related additional challenges for animal advocates to overcome. First is the challenge of facilitating broad-scale empathic connections with livestock animals. As has often been pointed out, certain species of animals – typically those comprising socially accepted companion animals and charismatic wildlife – hold more moral worth than livestock animals for the majority of people (O'Sullivan 2011; Bagaric & Akers 2012). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that livestock animals hold the separate status of providing and becoming food – they are resources in a way that companion animals are not – and in this role are neither part of nor particularly visible in people's lives. The majority of Australians would thus encounter livestock animals primarily in the form of items for purchase in supermarkets. This in turn translates into a lack of awareness, on the part of the majority of Australians, of the 'manifestly cruel conditions' in which intensively farmed animals are 'kept, treated and slaughtered' (Bagaric & Akers 2012, p. 72). Secondly it may be proposed that protecting the interests of livestock animals can only be to the detriment of human interests and well-being. This is an interpretation that reads the protection of livestock animal interests as equating to a call for veganism and the complete abolition of human use of these animals. Such is the reading performed, for example, by the National Farmers Federation on the Animals Australia 2012 'Make it Possible' campaign (Rodan et al. 2013). As many groups advocating animal protection strategies recognise, called for reforms will simply not succeed if they are so perceived as detrimental to human interests (Munro 2004; 1999).ⁱ

And yet the general public domain is not pro-animal cruelty. Social research shows that animal welfare – including livestock animal welfare – is an issue of growing importance for the Australian community (Coleman 2007; Mazur 2006; Signal & Taylor 2006; Taylor & Signal 2009; TNS Social Research 2006). Indeed in research carried out in Queensland, for instance, only 14% of survey respondents indicated that they would not be prepared to pay more for ethically produced animal products (Taylor & Signal 2009). Those calling for reform thus do share common ground with almost every member of Australian society; that is, the joint recognition that the intentional infliction of unnecessary pain on animals is unjustifiable. Given this bedrock of shared concern, effective animal advocacy, broad-scale community mobilisation and subsequent animal law reform is surely possible.

Mobilising Community Pressure through Social Media

Social media technologies have been used especially in organizing and implementing collective activities, promoting a sense of community and collective identity among marginalized group members, creating less-confined political spaces, establishing connections with other social movements, and publicizing causes to gain support from the global community. (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011, p. 1207)

The use of social media – short messaging services (SMS), blogs, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter – to mobilise and focus community pressure is well recognised (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011; Juris 2005; Penny 2011; Waldrum 2011; Wilson & Dunn 2011). Social networking tools are described by some as transforming the way movements organise, along with their scope, with referents typically being the so-called Twitter Revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and/or the ongoing wave of protests inspired by and modelled after #Occupy Wall Street (see, e.g., Waldrum 2011). Certainly the tendency of social movements to organise through decentralised networks is not new (Calhoun 1993; Gerlach & Hine 1970), but it is also clear that new social media tools – manifesting logics and promoting practices of both networking and aggregation – have helped circulate these networks into and across broader social spheres, exponentially enhancing their potential scale of operation (Juris 2012).

What is also significant regarding the capacity of social media and social networking tools to facilitate community mobilisation and collective action is its connection of ‘personal spheres of representation with public or semi-public spheres of political interaction’, indeed its intertwining of the public and the personal

to the point of inseparability (Miloni & Triga 2012, p. 5). Such intertwining strengthens the idea that an affectively driven, personalised participatory politics can be effective in mobilising political actions (Wright 2014).ⁱⁱ Such a model thus supports an understanding of power as networked, further conceiving of the ‘self-actualized networking of citizens engaged in lifestyle and identity politics’ as capable of being an effective driver of social change (Loader & Mercea 2011, p. 758; cf. Bennett 2003; Papacharissi 2010).

1. Animals Australia and Voiceless

Recent social media use by Animals Australia is a good example of this work. A peak national animal advocacy organisation with the stated objective of improving animal welfare in Australia, Animals Australia utilises multiple platforms to develop and mobilise public interest and engagement. For example, its recent ‘Make it Possible’ campaign (launched October 2012) – asserting a straightforward campaign message that a) factory farming is a major cause of animal cruelty, b) all factory farmed animals experience a life of intolerable and unnecessary suffering, and c) that every person can and should strive to end this suffering – utilises broadcast, new and social media. Specifically the campaign started with the launch of a video (made pro bono by LOUD advertising agency) on 21 October 2012 into two platforms: a) commercial broadcast media, with the video screened as a television commercial on commercial stations during prime time (during, for instance, *Masterchef*, *Border Security* and *60 Minutes*), and b) YouTube. An extended video, including a sequence of celebrity responses and endorsements,ⁱⁱⁱ was also uploaded by Animals Australia into its own website and into YouTube (Animals Australia 2012). Reported across a variety of hard and soft news programs,^{iv} gaining further public visibility from the public controversy regarding ‘Make it Possible’ shopping bags that was played out in May and June 2013 between Animals Australia, Coles and the National Farmers Federation (and other farming bodies),^v the campaign also built up an extensive online presence.

This comprised several components, each of which was constructed to actively engage visitors, facilitating their uptake of the campaign message, and to thereby increase traction for the campaign message: a) the activation of the comments facility within YouTube; b) the inclusion in the main campaign website of both a pledge facility and links to further action options; c) the capacity to post and share personal stories regarding the campaign message in the campaign website; d) the utilisation of other social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter. All components include the campaign message and opportunities to respond to and act on behalf of that message. First the inclusion of commentary and endorsements from high profile Australians in the campaign YouTube video has arguably encouraged viewer responses. As of early May 2014, for instance, the video had been viewed 135,657 times, liked 2576 times, shared 2243 times, and had

received over 800 comments. Of analysis carried out in March 2013, of the then 780 comments, 88% expressed support for the message. Analysis of comments also showed that viewers tended to engage with one or more of the following themes: a) personal aims for change and plans for advocacy (42%), including calls to go vegan or at least stop consuming animal products produced through factory farming, to shop responsibly (read labels, use strategies of boycott and buycott), to share the campaign, and to donate to Animals Australia; b) the highly emotive nature of the campaign (34%); c) preferences regarding veganism and vegetarianism (20%); d) the high levels of cruelty and suffering manifest in the livestock industry (19%). The campaign website (see <http://www.makeitpossible.com/>), in its turn, includes a pledge facility according to which viewers can pledge to either a) refuse factory farmed products; b) eat fewer animal products; c) go meat free; or d) donate. By early May 2014 the number of such pledges was at 208,742.

In addition, in October 2013, Animals Australia added an option into their website for viewers to share their ‘My Make it Possible Story’ (Animals Australia n.d.). Here viewers are asked two questions, both directly targeting their personal responses and commitment to the campaign message: ‘How did you feel when you discovered that most eggs, poultry and pork products come from animals in factory farms?’ and ‘How has becoming informed changed your life?’. In responding to these questions viewers could choose whether to make their responses public (their given name and state would be displayed with their responses).^{vi} Over the period from October 2013 to January 2014, over 2200 stories were posted onto the site. The highest number of stories posted on any one day in this period was 1065, all posted 21 October 2013, the day after the site opened this facility. Other high daily tallies included 22 October with 378 new stories, 23 October with 140 stories, 24 October with 75 stories, 29 October with 96 stories, and 11 December with 89 stories (the rest of this period showed daily story uploads ranging from zero to over 40). Content analysis of these stories has shown that the top seven feelings most often cited by respondents were: sickness, horror, disgust, anger, sadness, shock, and being brought to tears, with respondents typically further noting an intention to change their shopping practices now that they were alerted to the welfare situation of the animals providing the bulk of Australian poultry and pork products. Finally, the campaign engages Facebook and Twitter to further provide viewers with the opportunity to share responses and confirm their commitment to the campaign message. Reflecting the reach of these campaign tools, as of early May 2014 the ‘Make it Possible’ Facebook page listed 20,742 ‘likes’ (in comparison the main Animals Australia Facebook site listed 284,421 ‘likes’), while Animals Australia’s Twitter site – which has posted extensively on the campaign – listed 21,653 followers.

Voiceless, another of Australia's influential national animal protection organisations, whilst taking a similar stance to Animals Australia with regards to the need for social and legal change regarding the status of animals – its mission is to build 'influential networks in support of animal protection' (see <https://www.voiceless.org.au/our-approach/building-the-movement>) – engages differently with new and social media. Rather than constructing its new and social media sites with primary focus on a desired logic of aggregation as does Animals Australia, Voiceless follows a networking logic. Designating itself as a 'thinktank dedicated to animal protection' (Voiceless n.d.), Voiceless prioritises networking to facilitate change at governmental, legal, business and grassroots levels. Such activities include the development and delivery of expert submissions to government, the promotion of animal law within Australian law schools and the legal community, and the provision of financial support and incentives – through a grants and prizes program – to animal protection advocates, writers, scientists and journalists to progress the animal protection movement within Australia. Voiceless thus primarily uses new and social media to communicate with and mobilise its networks: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Of these platforms, as of early May 2014, the Voiceless Facebook site listed 10,387 'likes', Twitter 4234 followers, and the organisation's home YouTube video 3185 views (views of other Voiceless YouTube videos, primarily screening sections from Voiceless' animal law lecture series range from 28 to over 700). Although these raw figures are substantially lower than those listed in the Animals Australia sites, this is arguably not a measure of lesser impact.

2. Animal Effect: Events and News for Animal Lovers

As well as the kinds of strategic affect-driven social media campaigning utilised by animal advocacy organisations – particularly by Animals Australia – outlined above, such organisations are also engaging in new ways with the instantaneous and boundary-redefining capacity of social media technologies: the mobility they afford, and the instantaneous connectivities (with information and other members of social networks) they establish. Such engagement is demonstrated by the development, by and for the animal advocacy movement, of the platform and downloadable app titled *Animal Effect: Events and News for Animal Lovers*. Launched in May 2013, *Animal Effect* is a multi-platform social networking app that delivers animal advocacy news, events, and content directly to subscribers. As the creators of *Animal Effect* explain:

Our vision is to amplify the collective voices of animal lovers and advocates who, united by *Animal Effect*, are creating a world in which all animals are treated with care and respect. The *Animal Effect* Platform is the medium through which *Animal Justice*, the largest social justice movement on the

planet, can be accelerated. By joining this worldwide community, you are contributing to making the world a better place for all animals – human and non-human. (see <http://animaleffect.com/>)

Devised by animal advocate Clare Mann (organisational psychologist, director of Communicate31) and developed in conjunction with Brendan Norris (technical director at Communicate31) and David Piggon (a former software developer for Optus, Telstra, IBM and Honeywell, now at Software Synergy) the app had a simple premise: many activists and advocates believed that relying on email, Facebook, Twitter, websites, newspapers, word of mouth or notice boards was too unmanageable for achieving maximal effects with actions. Potential participants in actions felt they were missing out on knowing about upcoming events or were overwhelmed by the amount of information they were expected to keep track of. The solution was to create in one app a platform able to work as a dynamic repository of information for animal advocacy groups. An additional challenge was to make this customisable to the subscriber and a strategically useful tool for mobilisation for organisations publishing their events via the app. The result is an app that allows subscribers to filter a number of categories (advocacy, campaigns, competitions, conferences, education, expos, festivals, fundraisers, meeting, rallies, social, TV/media/film), further utilising smartphone technologies in Android and iPhone (iPad compatible) to present comprehensive information about event location (including maps, addresses, access to websites and calendar connectivity). Using a single app as a conduit for multiple interest groups and organisations also works to offset the kind of information fatigue experienced by subscribers receiving information from multiple sources, or from cross-posting (Mann 2013; Doherty 2013).

The app's dynamic content – filtered preferences, live maps, event information, search functionality, an integrated and customisable calendar with GPS-enabled location information – arguably has profound implications for the mobilisation of previously disparate animal activist groups and concerned individuals. Such innovation allows users – who are spread across the spectrum of highly organised, well established groups through to local community groups and interested individuals, as well as spread across the world – to share content and to mobilise for animal social justice at the push of a button. Explicitly designed as a capacity-builder and mobiliser, Animal Effect thus facilitates the articulation both of individuals into communities of people with shared interests, and of multiple disparate activist organisations into new and powerful configurations. Dana Campbell, the CEO of Voiceless, indeed describes the Animal Effect app in these terms: 'Incredible! Helping us leverage our ability to communicate key issues easily and quickly, thus increasing our effectiveness' (see <http://animaleffect.com/>). Finally, the development of the app marks a shift in the animal advocacy movement from utilising already existing social media technologies and outlets

(however successfully) to conceptualising, designing, building, testing and successfully rolling out a complex social media platform.

The New Architecture of Social Change

Architecture descriptions are used by the parties that create, utilize and manage modern systems to improve communication and co-operation, enabling them to work in an integrated, coherent fashion. Architecture frameworks and architecture description language are being created as assets that codify the conventions and common practices of architecting and the description of architectures within different communities and domains of application. (ISO/IEC/IEEE42010 2011, p. 5)

Animal advocates recognise that animal law reform needs to be driven by mainstream consumer pressure, meaning that mainstream consumers of animal products need to be mobilised into delivering sustained calls for social and legal change on behalf of the animals they continue to consume. Campaigning thus needs to be maximally affective and effective, able to affectively interpellate and mobilise mainstream consumers of animal products, able to maintain public visibility of animal welfare abuses, able to deliver integrated calls to action and responses to instances of animal cruelty to multiple stakeholders, and able to facilitate information sharing across multiple systems without fracturing potential participants into separate isolated communities. This necessitated complexity of aims and integrated systems can be effectively considered in the terms of social media architecture, defined for instance as the ‘structure that brings harmony, utility and durability to the diverse elements of an organization’s social media presence’ (Ross 2011). An effective social media architecture, as Ross clarifies, needs to encompass a) a coherent social media presence across all platforms with an easily navigable ‘link and like’ structure – participants must be able to navigate (link) to the communities where they belong (like); b) the capacity to identify, prioritise and address disparate communities and needs; and c) the architecture needs to remain sound over time (ibid.).

In the context of contemporary animal advocacy towards animal law reform within Australia, we contend that this movement has indeed developed a strong social media architecture facilitating both effective strategic campaigning and high levels of coordination and connectivity between multiple complex systems (of information and information exchange, platforms, campaigns, individuals, organisations, etc.). Animal advocate organisations are not only using already existing social media systems (such as Facebook, Twitter, and numerous websites) to mobilise and inform communities, but are also very much actively engaged in building capacity in the social media domain themselves, in a way that is conversant with the logic of

architecture known to enterprise and software frameworks. It is this development – particularly that of the development of the Animal Effect app – that is enabling animal advocates to operate across multiple environments (social, political, legal, economic, consumerist, etc.) in the most effective and purposeful manner possible, further allowing for the strategic alignment of different models of peer-to-peer information exchange with organisational information production and dissemination. Indeed the social media architecture now framing animal advocacy campaigning itself arguably also works to secure the movement’s vision of an end to animal cruelty and a reduction in suffering. Finally, then, it is the development, through the movement’s construction of strong and consistent social media architecture, of a smooth interoperability amongst multiple complex systems that facilitates the movement’s growing capacity to act not just as a mobiliser of strategic pressure and response, as an industry watchdog, but as a driver of policy and law reform.

Notes

ⁱ Bartlett (2002) argues that there are psychological and conceptual barriers to achieving change. He suggests that because humans are, to use Regan’s (2004, pp. 23–24) terms, ‘accustomed ... to treating ... animals as mere means to our ends’, our immediate resistance to the idea of animal rights makes achieving it ‘somewhere between difficult to practically impossible’ (Bartlett 2002, p. 176).

ⁱⁱ As Wright contends, most research on politically oriented discussion online has been focused on ‘established political events (e.g. elections), institutions (e.g. parliament/party websites), activities (e.g. government-run online consultations) and actors (e.g. elected representatives’ blogs)’ (2012b, p. 254). He, however, along with several others, is arguing that it is time to consider the emergence and impact of political discussion and actions from much broader, more inclusive fora (Wright 2012a; 2012b; cf. Freelon 2010; Graham 2010). In this vein, Wright proposes the examination of what he calls ‘third spaces’, defined by him as online discussion fora which hold ‘a primarily non-political focus, but where political talk emerges within conversations. The key link between participants is not (normally) their location but specific issues or topics’ (Wright 2012b, p. 254; also see Wright 2012a for a detailed account of ‘third space’).

ⁱⁱⁱ Endorsements were made by a variety of high profile Australians: Michelle Bridges, Simone Buchanan, Michael Caton, Santo Cilauro, Missy Higgins, Claire Hooper, Dave Hughes, Judith Lucy, Rove McManus, Mick Molloy, ‘Lehmo’, Pat Rafter, Hugh Sheridan, Peter Siddle and Dr Katrina Warren. Leading chefs Shannon Bennett, Simon Bryant, George Calombaris, Rob Marchetti, Matt Moran and Neil Perry also endorsed the campaign.

^{iv} The campaign was covered by, for example, *Woman’s Day*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *Herald Sun*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Guardian*, and by various news sites and programs including *The Weekly Times*, Channel 10 News, *ABC Online*, *Landline*, *Sunrise* and *The Project*. Another significant campaign tool was the ‘Make it Possible’ poster which included the images of thousands of the Australians who have committed to this campaign and which appeared in April 2013 as a full-page advertisement and public statement in *The Courier Mail*, *The Adelaide Advertiser*, *The West Australian*, *The Hobart Mercury*, *The Sunday Age* and *Sun Herald*.

^v Coles agreed in May 2013 to sell ‘winged pig’ campaign shopping bags, with some of the proceeds supporting the ‘Make it Possible’ campaign (a model used previously by the company to promote and support other groups such as Landcare Australia). Of this decision, Robert Hadler, Coles’ General Manager of Corporate Affairs, stated that Coles received ‘over 4,000 emails in 24 hours, 70 per cent of which were positive; 3400 posts on our Facebook site, 70 per cent of which were positive; 600 emails came in overnight, both to Coles and Westfarmers, the vast majority of them positive about what we were doing’ (cited in Frazer 2013). Coles’ decision garnered extensive media coverage, reported and analysed by a variety of mainstream print, digital and online sites including the *Herald Sun*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Courier Mail*, *The Australian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *ABC Online*, *The Weekly Times* (news.com.au), Yahoo news, *Adelaide Now*. It also gained widespread coverage through social media, being discussed in multiple blogs, including those of Coles, the Australian Farm Institute, *Queensland Country Life*, *Beef Central*, *Farming Ahead*, *Vegetarian Review*, *Diary of an Accidental Vegetarian*, *The Land*, *Stockland*, *Stock Journal*, *Farm Weekly*, *FarmOnline*, *The Conversation*; as well as in the Facebook sites for Animals Australia, Coles, the National Farmers Federation (NFF), and Farmers 4 Animal Welfare; and the Twitter sites for Animals Australia, Coles and the NFF. When news of the Coles – Animals Australia

bag sale broke, ‘beef and lamb producers threatened to stop supplying Coles with products, while other farmers threatened to stop buying fertiliser and insurance from Coles’ parent company, Wesfarmers’ (Malone 2013). In the view of the NFF, Coles’ support of the ‘Make it Possible’ campaign ‘sent all the wrong messages’ (ABC News June 5, 2013) and would cause ‘serious harm to many parts of animal agriculture in this country’ (The Land June 5, 2013). The controversy resulted in Animals Australia very publicly releasing Coles from its obligation regarding the shopping bags. As Animals Australia then framed these events, ‘the take-home message for shoppers’ can only be that ‘farmers are opposed to an initiative that aims to improve the lives of animals produced for food’ (see ABC News June 5, 2013). ‘How does this look to the average Australian to have rural lobbyists actively criticising efforts to encourage consumers to invest in higher standards of welfare? Consumer-driven change should be seen as a win/win as it gives producers the confidence to move to higher welfare systems’ (Oogjes, cited in Sampson 2013). Such reporting gained even more media attention and garnered Animals Australia enough donated funds for the reintroduction of the ‘Make it Possible’ television advertisements on prime time commercial television.

^{vi} Available on the Animals Australia website (if made public), responses were also used by Animals Australia to make a nationally broadcast radio advertisement.

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