

Australian meat consumers' understandings of
farm animal welfare

Emily Anne Buddle

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates Australian meat consumers' understandings about farm animal welfare and explores their underlying values associated with meat production. Focus groups and interviews were the primary sources of data used to capture how Australian meat consumers conceptualise the issue of farm animal welfare. A total of sixty-six meat consumers across Australia participated in interviews and focus groups, facilitating the documentation of how their values are enacted through their understandings of farm animal welfare. While extensive research into perceptions of farm animal welfare have been undertaken in other developed countries, this thesis is the first to explore Australian meat consumer views on these issues using qualitative research methods.

Popular understandings of an issue, and the associated values, are shaped by a variety of sources including the media, popular culture, education, religion and socioeconomic status. Two key influences associated with shaping consumer understandings of farm animal welfare are news media and the work of animal welfare activists. Due to the extensive involvement of the media in communicating about the issue of farm animal welfare in Australia, a framing analysis of Australian print press articles was undertaken as part of this dissertation. This analysis allowed the issue of farm animal welfare to be positioned within the broader social and cultural discourse within Australia. Alongside the changing media landscape, the adoption of social media has changed how animal welfare activists communicate with the public. There is anecdotal evidence of concern from the livestock industry about the role that animal welfare activists have on public understanding of farm animal welfare, and the use of animals in agriculture more generally, particularly since the rising popularity of social media in disseminating news and information. Thus this research also explores participant opinions of farm animal welfare activism, specifically online activism.

This research demonstrates that public understandings of farm animal welfare extend far beyond the ways in which an animal is treated on farm or within the meat value chain. This dissertation highlights that concerns about farm animal welfare are related to the quality of life experienced by the animal. Ideas about 'natural' and 'traditional' production were found to be blurred in the Australian context as, collectively, they were considered to be representative of what participants considered to be 'normal' in relation to livestock production. These production methods were understood by participants to provide livestock animals with a better quality of life. In contrast, despite an appreciation for affordable and abundant protein, participants rejected intensive production methods which provided such protein as they were viewed as having negative impacts on animal quality of life. Thus, intensively raised meat is a site of tension, with conflict between participant values of abundant affordable protein and animal quality of life. Furthermore, this research highlights that concerns for animal quality of life are not only related to an animal's emotional state but are associated with

concerns about food safety and quality. Using a 'risk' framework, findings are summarised to argue that farm animal welfare is an issue of increasing concern in Australia because modern livestock production practices impact animal quality of life, and in turn place meat quality at risk. These findings have implications for future research into attitudes of other meat value chain participants and communication strategies to generate constructive dialogues with consumers to ultimately re-build trust in meat producers and others in the value chain amongst meat consumers and the broader community.

Thesis declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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To my Poppy, Ian G. Cox.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In developed societies, raising animals for meat has come under significant public scrutiny in recent decades. Many concerns are related to different understandings amongst meat value chain stakeholders about the concept of 'animal welfare' (Dockès and Kling-Eveillard 2006; Vanhonacker et al. 2008; Hansson and Lagerkvist 2012; Coleman et al. 2016; Doughty et al. 2017). The meat value chain comprises of all interested parties including producers, processors, retailers and consumers, and involves processes such as slaughter and packaging which take place during the transition from animal in the paddock to meat on the plate. Each stakeholder may only be involved in one stage of the value chain, and each stage is distinct but interrelated: for instance, how the farmer attends to livestock on farm has an impact at the processing plant and may result in a low-quality product or a product unfit for human consumption. Popular media and commercial intelligence suggest that Australian consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about animal welfare in Australia's livestock industries (National Farmers Federation 2013). This concern is often associated to the percentage of Australians that are involved in agricultural production having decreased in recent decades (AgriFood Skills Council of Australia 2015), resulting in the average person relinquishing their involvement and thus their control over how an animal is produced for meat. In part because of relinquishing control, consumers have developed different understandings of farm animal welfare to those involved in producing livestock, which is reflected in increasing concern about how animals are produced for meat. However, as this dissertation highlights, consumer understandings of farm animal welfare are engrained within consumer values, created through the social and cultural experiences which help to shape their world view.

While there has been extensive research conducted in other developed countries, there has been comparatively less research undertaken to explore community and consumer understandings of farm animal welfare in Australia. As will be discussed in chapter 2, animal agriculture is of significant importance economically, historically and culturally in Australia, even though Australia is highly urbanised with 80 percent of people living in major cities (Australian Government 2015b). The Australian red meat sector is described as a "significant contributor to the rural economy", with the total value of Australia's beef and sheep-meat industry estimated to be \$17 billion and (Meat and Livestock Australia 2018, para. 4.). Australia is also different to other developed cultures due to having a relatively short period of time over which European food and fibre production activities have taken place; in addition, as species of plants and animals used in agriculture have all been introduced, agricultural activities are not seen as 'part of nature' (Saltzman, Head, and Stenseke 2011). Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesise that understandings about livestock production and what constitutes

good animal welfare may differ between Australia and other countries, and hence it is worthwhile to investigate them. Australian food habits and systems also differ in important ways from those of other countries. For example, Australians define vegetarian and veganism differently, with less Australians identifying as being a vegan or vegetarian (Beardsworth and Keil 1992) and have high rates of meat consumption and a long-standing identity as being meat eaters (Ankeny 2008; Chen 2016a). Furthermore, Australia's quarantine restrictions on imported animal products result in heavy reliance on domestic production; further, a duopoly in the retail sector results in retailers having a major role, perhaps more than producers and consumers, in how food becomes valued (Dixon 2003). Research into views of farm animal welfare within Australia has focused on specific production methods and have used survey-based methodologies (for example Coleman et al. 2016) which, while valuable such methodologies do not allow exploration of the underlying motivations and values as shaped by the social and cultural context, which this dissertation aims to uncover.

The Australian Research Council Discovery Project 'What shall we have for tea? Towards a new discourse for food ethics in contemporary Australia' (DP110105062; 2011-14) (see Bray and Ankeny 2017 for some published results) was a catalyst for the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project 'Getting to the meat of the matter: social and economic issues in animal welfare in Australia's livestock industry' (LP130100419; 2013-16). The research presented in this dissertation was completed under this ARC Linkage Project. As described above, there had been limited attempts prior to these projects, particularly in Australia, to unpack underlying motivations associated with the purchase of products with welfare claims and to explore whether such decisions are acts of ethical consumption or directly related to concerns about animal welfare. This dissertation will document the understandings which Australian consumers have about animal welfare in the sheep and beef cattle industries in Australia. As such, the major research question is

How do Australian meat consumers understand the issue of animal welfare within the Australian sheep and beef cattle industries?

In order to address this primary research question, the following subsidiary research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the social and cultural values which help to shape Australian consumer understandings of farm animal welfare?
2. What role do the social and cultural values play in shaping Australian consumer understandings of farm animal welfare?
3. How is the issue of farm animal welfare being communicated within the broader Australian community?

4. What role does animal welfare activism have in shaping consumer understandings about farm animal welfare in Australia?

The results presented in this dissertation highlight the complexity of understandings about animal welfare, the way in which the print press media in Australia are representing issues relating to farm animal welfare, and how meat consumers are responding to the work of animal welfare activists. The overall findings emphasise that understandings about farm animal welfare are not solely centred on concerns about the animal itself but are reflections of the risks which modern-day food production are seen as posing to the social and cultural values of Australian meat consumers.

1.2 Defining values

The initial aim of this research was to uncover the underlying social and cultural values related to farm animal welfare that are held by Australian meat consumers. However, determining how to best define values was not a straightforward task. 'Value' is an extremely multivalent word, often used indiscriminately and sometimes interchangeably with terms such as attitudes, opinions, perceptions, beliefs and ideology (to list a few). The concept of value is also defined differently across disciplines. Bergman (1998) notes that this difference in use across disciplines creates confusion, resulting in discrepancies between some theoretical approaches and empirical research results. While a common definition is yet to be established, it is important to define how the idea of value is applied within this dissertation. As Jackson (2013) suggests, values can be used as an explanatory concept which are considered to shape understandings of an issue and ultimately inform behaviour. As such, this dissertation aims to uncover underlying values associated with farm animal welfare by exploring consumer understandings of the issue as expressed during focus groups and interviews.

The concept of value has been used in a variety of disciplines to explore issues associated with animal welfare. For example, moral philosophers' question whether animals should be given the same moral status or value as that of humans based on the premise of sentience (Wilson N.D.). Moral philosopher Peter Singer is renowned for his publication of *Animal Liberation* (1975), which used philosophical tools from applied ethics to raise questions about the moral value of animals, particularly in animal experimentation and livestock production. In contrast, the field of economics defines value as how much something is worth during an exchange or transaction. There have been numerous willingness-to-pay studies designed to understand whether consumers place more value on farm animal welfare friendly products over conventionally raised counterparts (e.g. Olynk, Tonsor, and Wolf 2010). The definition of value varies again within psychology. Although this discipline has been dominated by the study of attitudes, exploring the conditions and process of attitudinal change rather than the formation of values per se, psychologists define values as beliefs related to resulting behaviour as desired within specific situations, organised in clear structures, and lead the evaluation and selection of preferred

people, events and behaviours (Prentice 1972). Social psychologists have used this definition to question why people in developed societies place a higher moral value on some animals over others (i.e., pet versus food animals) (Piazza 2015) and to explore justifications for eating meat (Piazza et al. 2015). The psychological definition echoes the sociological definition used in this dissertation. In sociology, values are “beliefs or conceptions that construe something as preferable or desirable”, playing a critical role in motivating and directing human behaviour (Thome 2015, pp. 47) which are specific to particular societies and cultures (Grassl 2017). This definition is useful for the purposes of this study as the primary aim of this dissertation is to uncover Australian meat consumers’ values which are associated with farm animal welfare.

Furthermore, the way in which we construct our values is influenced by the world in which we live. Values are influenced by things, experiences and people involved in our lives. Interactions with people, such as family members, teachers and school peers, religious leaders and friends, are involved in shaping an individual’s values. Although there have been studies of how consumers conceptualise animal welfare in other developed countries, the social and cultural interactions experienced by Australians are distinct from those experienced elsewhere. Other external phenomena, such as the print press media, advertising and popular culture, are also involved in shaping values. How we interact with these elements is what enables us to establish and rank our values based on importance (Connors et al. 2001). Due to the involvement of external phenomena, it is important for the current research to recognise and explore these phenomena in relation to consumer understandings of animal welfare. While animal welfare scientists and livestock producers contribute to the understandings of farm animal welfare, consumers have greater exposure to the news media and animal welfare activists as two of the largest contributors to the discussion about farm animal welfare in Australia. While this research explores the values of Australian meat consumers, it also examines how the Australian print press media has framed the issue of farm animal welfare (chapter 3) and exposure to farm animal welfare activism (chapter 5). Results from media analysis, alongside focus group and interview results, are synthesised in a summarising chapter to highlight Australian meat consumers’ values associated with livestock agriculture.

1.3 Methodology

Although limited in number, previous Australian research looking at community understandings of farm animal welfare has generally taken a *positivist* approach, predominantly using surveys or have focussed on particular practices used within agriculture (e.g. Coleman et al. 2016) and tended to focus more on knowledge. Positivists believe that a single reality exists (Creswell 2013) and that sociological inquiry should be objective, thus quantitative methods are often preferred by positivists as they are considered to be reliable, verifiable and precise (Abrutyn 2017). In contrast to positivism, *social constructivism* allows researchers to explore the world in which they live in and develop subjective

meanings which are directed to certain objects or things. As Creswell (2013) emphasises, these subjective meanings are “negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others...and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (p. 25). Therefore, the research presented in this dissertation will use a *social constructivist* approach as it will rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of farm animal welfare and explore the complexity of views, rather than focusing on narrow meanings in a few categories or ideas (Creswell 2013).

Dussauge, Helgesson, and Lee (2015) propose *valuography* as an empirically focused research method which explores the enacting, ordering and displacing of values, rather than focusing on what values “really are” (pp. 268). This method encourages the researcher to “examine whatever is included as well as excluded as pertinent values in a given process” (Dussauge, Helgesson, and Lee 2015, pp. 268). In short, these authors describe their research method as “an invitation to study the making of values” (ibid., pp. 271). Investigating social values is particularly suitable for exploration of controversial issues, particularly as values are challenged in such situations. When someone’s values are challenged as a result of conflict, either within themselves or caused by an external force, people express their concerns which may be collected through empirical research methods (ibid.). Thus, this dissertation employs a version of the valuography methodology to explore the values of Australian meat consumers through their expressed understandings of, and concerns about, farm animal welfare.

Research into the socio-cultural backgrounds of consumers cannot be carried out solely with quantitative surveys alone due to people’s beliefs about food being “tied to diverse and latent value systems” (Croney et al. 2012, p. 1570). Qualitative research techniques are suitable for unexplored and moral themes and can help to illustrate consumer’s underlying motivations and attitudes about an issue, which generally cannot be revealed through closed survey questions (Malhotra 2006; Vanhonacker et al. 2010). As part of the valuography approach, qualitative methods in the form of focus groups and interviews were used to explore the understandings of farm animal welfare amongst Australian meat consumers. Due to the lack of prior knowledge about how Australian consumers conceptualise farm animal welfare means that the use of focus groups is appropriate for exploring this uncharted territory and have been used in similar international studies such as Vanhonacker et al. (2010). Qualitative research allows researchers to explore not only the major concerns about an issue, but why they are concerns. For example, this research could have used surveys to explore whether people were concerned about farm animal welfare which would have generated a number or percentage of people concerned. However, this approach would not have permitted detailed exploration into *why* people are concerned about farm animal welfare; hence qualitative methods were utilised as they permitted the key research questions to be addressed. Methods used in this dissertation are not strictly based on those used in traditional grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss

1990), but rather use the generic inductive qualitative model (Maxwell 2005, Hood 2007) which incorporates the research process with description and interpretation during generation of research questions, as well as purposeful sampling including demographic-based recruitment to strengthen the ability to generalise across populations and to other locations (Buddle, Bray, and Ankeny 2018). Due to the qualitative nature of this research that explores underlying values of participants, this research places greater emphasis on what is said by participants rather than how many participants made a particular claim, thus not seeking representativeness or statistical significance (Hood 2007; Bray and Ankeny 2017). The main sources of data were transcripts from interviews and focus groups which were analysed as rich, narrative texts and coded using methods similar to 'open coding' (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

While phenomena such as advertising and popular culture have substantial influence on people's food choices, reliance of developed societies on media for news and current affairs cannot be understated. Similarly, the work of animal welfare activists has also been generating a substantial news media presence in Australia. Accessibility to news and exposure to animal welfare activism has also proliferated in the digital age with the rise of social media. This dissertation could have explored how demographics, culture, education and/or policy influence consumer understanding of farm animal welfare. However, due to the important role of media and activism in recent public debates about animal welfare, these phenomena were selected as key foci for this dissertation. Chapter 3 explores how farm animal welfare has been framed within Australian media, using print press articles from major newspapers as the source of data. Chapter 5 uses data collected from focus groups and interviews to investigate the perspectives of meat consumers about animal welfare activism, especially through exposure on social media. Specific methods for both the media analysis, and focus groups and interviews, are presented in detail within the respective chapters of this dissertation.

1.4 Summary

The welfare of livestock animals is of increasing interest within various developed countries, Australia being no exception. As discussed, values play an important role in shaping how one understands an issue. This introduction highlights that values are socially and culturally shaped and proposes that external information sources, such as the media and activists, play critical roles in shaping understandings about farm animal welfare issues. Australia has distinct social and cultural differences to the rest of the world, providing a critical opportunity to document consumer understandings of farm animal welfare.

Chapter 2 - Literature review

2.1 Introduction

There has been a substantive amount of research conducted which explores how consumers understand farm animal welfare. However, much of this research has been conducted in countries other than Australia. The purpose of this literature review is to highlight the gaps in the literature and to help guide the current research and introduced the major topics addressed in this dissertation. It is important to note that due to the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, the amount of literature relevant to the major themes of the research is significant thus the scope of literature covered in this review has been limited in the interest of relevance, space and time. As such, the following literature review first documents Australia's cultural ties to meat consumption to highlight the social and cultural context in which this research is being conducted. The review introduces how animal welfare became a topic of interest within the developed world and describes how animal welfare is defined by various participants in the meat value chain, emphasising why animal welfare is a contentious issue in developed countries. Existing literature which explores consumer attitudes to animal welfare is outlined to highlight gaps in current knowledge, particularly the lack of research conducted in an Australian context, but to also help guide which questions to ask in the interviews and focus groups (chapter 4 and 5). Increased interest in animal welfare has also been attributed to the 'ethical consumption' phenomena, which is discussed within this review. As this research also aims to understand how animal welfare is communicated in the print press (chapter 3) and how Australian consumers respond to animal welfare activism (chapter 5), this chapter concludes with a discussion of relevant literature related to the relationship between the media and animal welfare activism.

2.2 Australia as a nation of meat eaters

In the relatively short period since European settlement, Australians have been amongst the world's largest per-capita meat consumers (Baghurst 1999; Ankeny 2008). It is argued that the settler's passion for meat came from the British, as during the 1700s in Europe they were notorious for excessive consumption of meat and alcohol (Santich 1995). During Australia's early colonial period, meat consumption was only around two pounds (approximately 900 grams) per week per person in England, while allowances were up to 10 pounds (or 4.5 kilograms) per week per person in Australia (ibid.). Consequently, "meat three times a day" was a rallying call for labourers and tradesmen to encourage them to settle in Australia in the 1840s (Santich 1995 pp.12-13). At this time, sheep-meat was a by-product of the successful wool trade (Baghurst 1999; Baghurst, Record, and Leppard 2000) making red meat cheap and readily available (Wood 1988). In 1883, journalist Richard Twopeny said: "Of course meat is the staple to Australian life. A working-man whose whole family did not eat meat three times a day would indeed be a phenomenon. High and low, rich and poor, all eat meat to an incredible extent,

even in the hottest weather. [And not in] mere slices, but in substantial hunks” (Bannerman 1998, p. 17). In 1897, Dr Philip Muskett described eating meat as “almost a religion” for Australians and said “at any rate, the Australian is certainly a meat worshipper” (Santich 1995 p.23). The ‘protein era’, where meat was a staple and fresh fruits and vegetables were secondary, ended about the time of WWI, after the discovery of vitamins (ibid.). However, many Australians still consider meat, especially red meat, to be part of Australian culture, often reiterated in red meat marketing campaigns from the peak industry body, Meat and Livestock Australia, in a bid to maintain and increase red meat consumption (Meat and Livestock Australia 2017a, b).

The first national estimates of meat consumption date from the mid-1930s, where average meat consumption, excluding poultry, averaged 107 kilograms per capita, of which beef accounted for 59 percent of consumption. It was not until the 1960s that mutton and lamb became equally as popular as beef (Santich 2014). Other protein sources, such as pork and chicken, have since become a greater part of the Australian diet due to health ideals and price, while red meat consumption has declined since the 1970s from approximately 90 kilograms to 40 kilograms per person in 2011 (ibid.). In 2015, the average Australian consumed approximately 111 kilograms of meat per person, made up of 45.3 kilograms of chicken, 27.9 kilograms of pork, 27.6 kilograms of beef and 10.6 kilograms of lamb (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences 2016).

Although meat consumption has traditionally been normalised in contemporary developed cultures and Australia’s meat consumption remains amongst the highest in the world, it is important to acknowledge that meat consumption is increasingly becoming a more reflexive practice, with a range of meat-reducing strategies being explored by many consumers. Evaluation of one’s meat consumption is often driven by motives which are either personal, such as those intended to better personal health or well-being, or by moral considerations, such as concern for another’s wellbeing, including the environment and non-human animals (De Backer and Hudders 2014). As Galusky (2014) suggests, “[c]hoices about what to eat expand beyond taste and become expressions of value and demands for solutions” (pp. 932). Ankeny (2018) also states that “[i]n modern – at least Australian – society...being a vegetarian or being a locovore or whatever else has become part of many people’s identity claims” (quoted in Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2018b; see also Ankeny 2012). Meat-reduced diets are growing in popularity and limit the quality, type, and/or frequency of meat consumption. Such diets include low-meat/plant-based diets, such as the Mediterranean diet, forms of semi-vegetarianism and ‘flexitarianism’, and pescatarianism, lacto-ovo-vegetarianism, and veganism (Hayley, Zinkiewicz, and Hardiman 2015). A recent report from Roy Morgan Research (2016) shows that many Australians are decreasing meat consumption, citing reasons including health, environmental concerns and animal welfare concerns. While the incidence of vegetarianism and veganism is still relatively low in most developed societies, it is important to recognise that such diets

are rising in popularity as more people begin to question whether meat production and consumption aligns with their values. Whether consumers are committed meat consumers or starting to evaluate their meat consumption to the point of abstaining from meat altogether, one recurring concern amongst all groups is how livestock species are treated within the meat value chain, which adds a layer of complexity to the issue, particularly due to the number of diverse definitions used to describe animal welfare.

2.3 The rise of 'animal welfare'

There has been interest in human-animal relations for centuries, as highlighted by the quote commonly used by animal rights campaigners from moral philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1789 "The question is not can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But can they suffer?" (as quoted in Singer 2009, p. 7). Scientific investigation in the eighteenth century illustrated the extent of animals' mental capabilities which in turn influenced early philosophers such as Bentham to discuss animal sentience (Lawrence 2008). Although the debate over animals' moral status has been long-standing, attention to animal suffering has proliferated since the adoption of more intensive housing methods within livestock production. The recent industrialisation and intensification of farming in Europe and the United Kingdom came about at the beginning of the postmodern period in the 1950s (Molloy 2011) in response to the fear of hunger experienced during and after the World Wars (Boogaard, Oosting, and Bock 2008; Almstedt 2013). Modern livestock production methods allowed those in developed countries to overcome potential risks such as disease outbreaks, food spoilage and loss of commodities through extreme weather or natural disaster (Beck 1992; Jackson 2013). Adoption of modern methods allowed meat to be produced and distributed to overcome the hunger experienced during the war periods.

During the post-war period, Australian agriculture also dramatically changed. In what Robinson (2004) terms the "second [international] food regime" (pp. 43), the industrialisation of agriculture pushed productivity to a new level (Fielke and Bardsley 2015). Global agriculture moved to productivist goals which built the foundation for Australia's agricultural policy, prioritising increased agricultural production over all other considerations. Productivist agriculture is distinguished by three key structural elements – intensification, concentration and specialisation (Argent 2002)¹. The level of intensification advanced when cheap animal feed became readily available through mechanisation by embracing the power of oil (*ibid.*), the introduction of nitrogen-based fertilisers and agricultural chemicals, and by increased demand for meat caused by the increasing size of populations and associated wealth in developed countries (Vanhonacker et al. 2010). A focus on maximising productivity and profitability resulted in the growth of intensive livestock production systems, such as

¹ Throughout this dissertation, the systems introduced while moving towards productivist goals are referred to as "intensive" systems.

indoor housing to increase the number of animals produced in a limited amount of space, systems which Vanhonacker et al. (ibid.) suggest rarely considered animal welfare but instead frequently compromised it. Animal husbandry has intensified, arguably behind closed doors, as driven by consumer and retailer demand and facilitated by what Jasanoff (2004) has identified as the post-war 'social contract' between science and technology on one hand, and the state/government on the other.

Public inattentiveness to the rise of intensive livestock production was short lived. The 1964 publication of *Animal Machines* by Ruth Harrison (1964, republished in 2013) generated public interest in livestock production and resulted in developing the positive concept of 'welfare', rather than the focus merely on cruelty, in legislation associated with the treatment of production animals (Woods 2012). Peter Singer's publication of *Animal Liberation* in 1975 (Singer 1975) was also a catalyst for the inception of many animal rights and activist organisations, including Animals Australia, who have been attributed to increasing public interest in and awareness about farm animal welfare. While there has been considerable concern about intensive livestock production methods, also termed "factory farming" (Harrison 2013, p. 35) or described as "concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs)" (Gunderson 2013, p. 260), such production systems continue to exist in one form or another. More and more studies are beginning to recognise that intensive animal production systems can have negative impacts on animal welfare (Napolitano et al. 2007; Tuytens et al. 2009). However, rather than reverting back to more extensive styles of livestock production, research has focused on improving animal welfare within the intensive system. It was this research focus which resulted in animal welfare science becoming an established discipline "to create a formidable livestock sector in the UK and elsewhere into which individual animals and their individual welfare arguably all but disappeared" (Buller and Roe 2018, p. 27). Research efforts into production methods initially aimed to continue maximising productivity while addressing needs of animals and primarily focused on the connection between animal biology and the animal's 'welfare state' (Fox 1980). A better understanding of animal motivation, cognition and the complexity of social behaviour has resulted in rapid developments in animal welfare science over the past 30 years (Broom 2011). There have also been considerable scientific developments in understanding animal sentience in the past 50 years (Hötzel 2014).

Animal welfare science has established itself as a clear and identifiable scientific discipline. Highlighting that an animal with poor welfare may be physically healthy and productive but suffer from a range of negative psychological states, such as frustration, fear and so on, has been a critical starting point for animal welfare science (Buller et al. 2018). Buller et al. (ibid) identify animal welfare science to be a "peculiar hybrid" of applied ethology, animal production science and preventative veterinary medicine (p. 4). From a biological perspective, animal welfare considers the physiological and psychological

limits of an animal's capacity to survive within a particular environment, specifically the social and physical environment. Drawing from ethology, animal welfare established an understanding of animal behaviour – how an animal normally behaves, how it should behave or how it should want to behave based on the circumstance – both individually and socially in natural and artificial farming environments. However, due to social interest in animal welfare in food production, animal welfare science has had to constantly reflect on the interrogation and criticism of what may be considered as socially, politically and, in turn, ethically acceptable ways in which to treat livestock animals (ibid.). Thus, despite significant attention animal welfare has received from scientific disciplines, animal welfare must not be considered solely as a scientific concept. Instead, animal welfare science is entangled within the broader understandings of animal welfare (Appleby 2008). This is clearly explained by Duncan and Fraser (1997):

'Animal welfare' is not a term that arose in science to express a scientific concept. Rather it arose in society to express ethical concerns regarding the treatment of animals. The 'welfare' of an animal refers to its quality of life, and this involves many different elements such as health, happiness, and longevity, to which different people attach different degrees of importance...However, because science plays an important role in interpreting and implementing social concerns over the quality of animal life, animal welfare was adopted as a subject of scientific research and discussion. This adoption has led to a remarkably protracted debate on how to conceptualize, in a scientific context, a concept that is fundamentally rooted in values (p. 20).

Animal welfare science, in the words of de Greef and Bos (2007), must be "socially robust" as animal welfare "operates with a context of potentially competing societal drivers and market forces" and is "fundamentally a relational science" (cited in Buller et al. 2018, pp. 84). Animal welfare science has had significant interest in the welfare of animals whose lives and deaths we are involved with, and thus responsible for, namely farm animals. Growth of the animal welfare science discipline has allowed us to become, as Haraway (2008) terms, "response-able" (p. 71) as it provides the ability to identify and respond to the needs and wants of animals under our care (Buller et al. 2018, Buller and Roe 2018).

Consideration towards an animal's welfare often focuses on three common aspects: physical aspects, mental aspects, and naturalness (Appleby 2008; Bray, Buddle, and Ankeny 2017). People within the meat value chain may focus on one or a mixture of the three aspects (Duncan and Fraser 1997; Fraser et al. 1997; Appleby 2008) and emphasise their importance based on the individual's values or previous experience. The first aspect refers to animal welfare in relation to the body and physical environment (e.g. Broom 1986, 1991): "if an animal is healthy and producing well, it is faring well" (Vanhonacker et al. 2012, p. 80). The second aspect relates animal welfare to feelings and emotions (Nordenfelt 2006; Stamp Dawkins 2006): "if an animal is feeling well, it is faring well" (Vanhonacker et al. 2012, p. 80). These two aspects have been used by scientists to understand animal welfare, drawing on disciplines such as animal behaviour science, immunology, stress physiology, psychology, and animal and

veterinary sciences (Hemsworth et al. 2015). However, animal welfare is not considered as a purely scientific issue as it is 'rooted in values' and deals with public concerns (Napolitano et al. 2007; Fisher 2009; Broom 2014). The third concept focuses on animals living a natural life (Kiley-Worthington 1989) which has received the greatest amount of emphasis from the public: "animals fare best if they can live according to their nature and perform their full range of natural behaviours" (Vanhonacker et al. 2012, pp. 80-81).

The three common aspects associated with farm animal welfare are expressed within the 'five freedoms of animal welfare':

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour
2. Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
4. Freedom to express normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind
5. Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering (Broom 1988)

However, definitions of animal welfare have broadened more recently to include other concepts that people value, such as the dignity and integrity of animals (Appleby 2005), positive welfare states (Mellor and Beausoleil 2015) and quality of life (Mellor 2016) (also see Cornish, Raubenheimer and McGreevy 2016 for a more comprehensive review). Therefore, the five freedoms are limited as they outline ideal states instead of standards for acceptable welfare (Rollin 2013). Physiological states, such as stress or hunger, can clearly be avoided within intensive production systems. However, this does not mean they are indicators for acceptable welfare conditions. The freedoms provide a framework to analyse welfare within any system (ibid.), but do not identify which systems are better for animal welfare. Despite the definition of animal welfare becoming more about animal affective states, much research into farm animal welfare is still centred on the impact of associated practices on profitability and productivity of the industry, rather than how the broader public conceptualise animal welfare.

Sociological research exploring human-animal relations has highlighted a change in public attitudes towards animals over the past 40 to 50 years, evolving from a traditional utilitarian perspective to a more compassionate and empathetic level of care, which has been attributed to the growth of post-material values within developed societies more generally (Franklin and White 2001; Mazur et al. 2006; Goodfellow, Tensen, and Bradshaw 2014; Goodfellow 2016). This shift from utilitarian perspective to greater levels of empathy has been attributed to the growth of post-material values within developed

societies more broadly (Mazur et al. 2006). Changing attitudes towards animals can be attributed to the movement of many people away from livestock production as well as increasing popularity of keeping pets. Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership globally, with 62 percent of households owning pets (RSPCA 2018) and a higher proportion of Australians living with a dog and/or cat than with a child (Roy Morgan Research 2015). Alongside the increase in pet ownership, there has been an incredible economic rise in the pet industry, with Australian households spending more than \$12.2 billion annually on pet products and services, representing an increase of 42 percent from 2013 to 2016 (Australian Veterinary Association 2016). This growth in pet ownership comes with an increased tendency to anthropomorphise, with many now considering pets as humans (Bulliet 2005) or at least as moral others who are perceived to have different emotions and personalities (Fessler 2017). The term 'fur baby' has emerged to describe the stronger relationship which has developed between human and pet, with both the Oxford English and Macquarie Dictionaries adding the term to their pages in 2015 (Australian Veterinary Association 2016). Animal welfare activists also push for animals to be treated as individuals in their campaigns, humanising the animal by giving them a name and identity to encourage an emotional response within the viewer (Mummery and Rodan 2017). It is likely that strong feelings towards our pets and the recognition of animal sentience have added to the mounting concern for livestock animals, as people do not want to put the quality of life experienced by fellow sentient-beings at risk.

Changing attitudes towards animals are resulting in increasing concern for animal welfare and creating tension between current livestock production methods and consumer expectations (Te Velde, Aarts, and Van Woerkum 2002; Frewer et al. 2005; Vanhonacker et al. 2008; Goodfellow 2016), particularly between the extent to which an animal should be able to have a natural life within an artificial environment (Bray, Buddle, and Ankeny 2017). Changes in attitudes towards animals have resulted in the concept of farm animal welfare being interpreted differently by various interest groups and members of the meat value chain. Rushen (2003) explains the importance of understanding how the public views animal welfare to shed light on factors which influence people's behaviours and emphasises the difference of opinion between different participants in the value chain. As Te Velde et al. (2002) describe, interpretation of animal welfare is influenced by "convictions (opinions about 'the way things are', assumptions that are taken for granted), values (opinions about the way things should be), norms (the translations of these values into rules of conduct), knowledge (constructed from experience, facts, stories and impressions), and interests (economic, social and moral interests)" (pp. 206). Similarly, as Fraser (2008) states: "our understanding of animal welfare is both values-based and science-based. In this respect, animal welfare is like many other topics of 'mandated' science...where the tools of science are used within a framework of values" (pp. 1). While there is scientific evidence to provide justification for how some farm animals are produced, some oppose these justifications on

the grounds that they align more closely with profitability of the system, or focus more on the animal's exchange value, rather than moral obligations towards animals which many in developed societies think we should have (Bray, Buddle, and Ankeny 2017). Producers and animal scientists often position themselves as those who have the greatest understanding of animal welfare while dismissing concerns of the lay person as emotional or ignorant. Meanwhile, the public argue that the industry's interests in animal welfare stems from an economic standpoint and consider that their own consumer viewpoint is ethically motivated (Vanhonacker et al. 2007). Hewson (2003) further suggests that different ideas of welfare are valued differently by stakeholders, resulting in ethical and practical challenges for the meat value chain. These various and often conflicting understandings of animal welfare are created through different knowledge levels and values of value chain members and are adding to the tension which exists around the issue of farm animal welfare.

2.4 Consumer understandings of animal welfare – What we already know

2.4.1 *Global understandings of animal welfare*

Assorted studies from other developed societies, such as Europe and North America, have explored consumer and citizen understandings of farm animal welfare. One of the first studies was conducted by Kiley-Worthington (1989) who demonstrated that people often refer to the ability for the animal to engage in natural behaviours when defining animal welfare. Over the last decade or so, the vast majority of research conducted in this space has been from a research group led by Wim Verbeke from the University of Ghent in Belgium. Using their research and existing literature, Verbeke's group identified seven dimensions associated with consumer understandings of animal welfare – three were considered as animal-based and included suffering and stress, ability to engage in natural behaviours, and animal health, while four were considered as resource-based, including housing and barn climate, transport and slaughter, feed and water, and human-animal relationships (Van Pouke et al. 2006). Research which followed often fell within these dimensions: consumers were seen to focus on the animal's resources, especially access to unenclosed areas, believing that such environments will lead to happy and healthy animals (Lassen, Sandøe, and Forkman 2006; Miele et al. 2011; Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014). Other research has demonstrated that consumers prefer animals to be raised in natural environments (Boogaard, Oosting, and Bock 2008; Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014) with low stocking density (Vanhonacker et al. 2009), support humane handling practices (Boogaard, Oosting, and Bock 2008; Vanhonacker et al. 2008; Boogaard, Bock, et al. 2011) and highlight concern associated with humane transport and slaughter (Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014). Consumers also objected to animal suffering caused by modern production methods (Vanhonacker et al. 2008; Tuytens et al. 2010; Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014). All of this research has provided

insights into how consumers conceptualise the issue of farm animal welfare, and their preference for how livestock are treated within the meat value chain.

Economic studies have examined how consumers value products with associated welfare claims. Welfare claims refer to those labelled on a product in relation to the production system used, or how the animal was treated. Such claims include categories such as free-range, grass-fed, antibiotic-free, and sow stall-free. In economic terms, animal welfare is a credence attribute - a product characteristic that cannot be evaluated or ascertained by the individual consumer and cannot be directly determined by the consumer at the time of purchase or after consumption, unlike experience attributes such as taste and flavour (Bonne and Verbeke 2007). Thus, consumers rely on signifiers such as labelling to determine credence attributes, such as whether the product was produced in a free-range environment. Consumer socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge of animal welfare issues and trust in information about methods of production are all motivators for buying products that may have an animal welfare claim (Toma et al. 2012; Gerini, Alfnes, and Schjoll 2016). For example, using choice experiments in the USA, Olynk, Tonsor and Wolf (2010) demonstrated a higher willingness to pay for positive animal welfare attributes verified by a trusted authority such as the USDA. While provision of information may not increase willingness to purchase some products (Elbakidze and Nayga 2012), European studies indicate that some consumers are willing to increase the amount of money they spend on meat by a third in response to welfare labelling (Kehlbacher, Bennett, and Balcombe 2012). Also, despite growth in ethical egg production in the USA, Chang, Lusk and Norwood (2010) highlighted that the average consumer willingness to pay for cage-free and organic eggs was much less than estimated price premiums. While valuable in understanding how much more consumers may pay for animal welfare friendly products, these studies are limited as they do not explore why they may prefer such products over conventional products and assume that there is a shared understanding of the terminology used.

Studies which focus on understanding consumer and citizen attitudes towards animal welfare have found differences in knowledge and socio-economic status influence attitudes towards animal welfare (Verhue and Verzeijden 2003; Frewer et al. 2005; Kendall, Lobao, and Sharp 2006; Vanhonacker et al. 2007; Vanhonacker et al. 2010). Understandings of animal welfare are impacted by where one grew up, for instance if someone was raised in a rural area and had relocated to an urban setting and vice versa (Kendall, Lobao, and Sharp 2006). People living in rural settings tend to have more positive evaluations of animal welfare (Verhue and Verzeijden 2003; Frewer et al. 2005). However, others have found no discrepancies between understandings of animal welfare between rural and urban consumers (Vanhonacker et al. 2007). Women are more likely to express a greater concern about animal welfare than men, with previous research suggesting women's concern is often related to the primary role of women as caretakers, and because they are more likely to engage in household tasks

which put them in contact with animals, such as purchase and preparation of food (Verhue and Verzeijden 2003; Kendall, Lobao, and Sharp 2006; Vanhonacker et al. 2007; Vanhonacker et al. 2010). Kendall, Lobao and Sharp (2006) found that lower income earners and less educated consumers were more likely to express greater concerns for animals. However, contradictory results have been found, where consumers with higher levels of education have greater concern for animal welfare (Verhue and Verzeijden 2003) or where there has been no difference between various education levels (Vanhonacker et al. 2007). The influence of age on understandings of animal welfare is also inconsistent across studies, with some studies suggesting younger people have greater concern for animal welfare (Verhue and Verzeijden 2003), while others suggest there is no variation that can be attributed to age (Vanhonacker et al. 2007). Such studies also have demonstrated that understandings of farm animal welfare vary dependant on the social and cultural contexts in which the research took place.

Although animal welfare concerns are not strong drivers of purchasing behaviour in comparison to other attributes such as price, taste and health, recent studies have shown that consumers consider animal welfare to be connected to both taste and health attributes, so animal welfare (as understood by the consumer and not other participants in the value chain) may be of increasing importance when purchasing meat as it is used as a proxy for safety and health. As a result, there is increased appreciation by retailers and producers that quality aspects of meat products can be negatively impacted by poor animal welfare conditions (Blokhus et al. 2008). Those who choose to eat meat are typically consumers who value taste and the related sensory attributes present in animal food products (Vanhonacker et al. 2007; Lusk 2011). These consumers select meat based on their understanding of how the product will taste and are willing to pay more for a superior sensory experience (Vanhonacker and Verbeke 2014). In general, meat eaters do not consider animal welfare issues to the same degree as other more conscientious consumers (Vanhonacker et al. 2007; Lusk 2011). However, a Flemish study found that products with animal welfare claims were positively associated with enhanced product taste, but products with such claims are not as strongly related to attributes such as quality, healthiness, safety and environmental friendliness (Verbeke 2012). A survey conducted in the United Kingdom found that 78 percent of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that 'animals raised under higher standards of care will produce safer and better-tasting meat' (Norwood, Lusk, and Prickett 2007). A link between food safety and farm animal welfare in terms of antibiotic and growth hormone use in livestock production has also been documented (Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014) along with concern about genetically modified products (Lagerkvist and Hess 2011). Thus, concerns for animal welfare may not solely be based on concerns for the animal itself but used as a proxy for communicating concerns about food safety and health.

2.4.2 Australian understandings of animal welfare

A lack of knowledge about animal production practices within the community is often associated with increasing community concern about farm animal welfare (Bray, Buddle, and Ankeny 2017). Previous studies have demonstrated that Australians have generally low levels of knowledge about agriculture (Worsley, Wang, and Ridley 2015). Australians often self-report a wide variability of knowledge about farming practices, but often do not perform better than chance when asked factual questions about animal agriculture (Coleman 2010; Coleman et al. 2015). However, as previously discussed, the understanding of an issue is created through an individual's personal experiences, knowledge and values. While previous studies have contributed insight into general knowledge associated with farm animal welfare, they do not account for broader social context and participant values. Such research does not help understand how this lack of knowledge is impacting consumer motivation or actual purchasing behaviours, or citizen behaviours such as supporting or opposing particular policies which may impact animal production practices.

Few studies have explored willingness to pay for products with welfare claims in Australia. Taylor and Signal (2009) relied on a self-reporting survey, which presents limitations due to reliance on self-reporting including the tendency to promote positive bias towards issues presented as areas of concern. Their research showed that only 6 percent of participants were not concerned about farm animal welfare, while 37 percent described themselves as 'concerned' (ibid.). However, research on consumer willingness to pay using behavioural-economic methods in conjunction with broader the research to which this dissertation contributes has demonstrated that despite recent media reports highlighting unethical treatment of farm animals in Australia, a large share of meat buyers remain unconcerned about farm animal welfare, with 70 percent of consumers expressing neutral views (Malek, Umberger and Rolfe 2017). Interestingly, in the work carried out by Taylor and Signal (2009), self-rated knowledge did not increase willingness to pay amongst rural consumers but did amongst those from metropolitan areas. In Malek, Umberger and Rolfe's (2017) study, consumers who either did not rank animal welfare as important or had neutral views towards animal welfare were least knowledgeable about livestock production practices which was attributed to their disinterest towards information about farm animal welfare. These findings suggest that consumers work with different types of knowledge, may not be accepting of new knowledge, or the knowledge that they have has led to different perspectives towards willingness to pay for improved farm animal welfare.

2.5 Ethical consumption

Food consumption in developed countries has gone far beyond the primary utilitarian role of serving basic human requirements to survive. Long gone are the days where food is only consumed for sustenance and energy, where very little choice was available to the consumer, and often the food

accessible was what they had produced themselves or what could be sourced locally and seasonally. Food choices were a matter of personal preference and were associated with factors such as cost, convenience, availability and habit. In developed countries, the awareness of where food comes from is increasing and becoming more complex. The problem of “what to eat” has moved away from what we can source to what we feel like consuming, to the point where people have started to question where their food comes from, with concern about whether it is ethically produced (Carlucci et al. 2009; Vanhonacker et al. 2010). Consumers are now encouraged to reconnect with their food by either growing their own or sourcing food from short, local supply chains (Buller and Roe 2018) as a way for those seeking to alleviate or act on their concerns related to the health, economic, social and ethical concerns related to the global food supply chain (Carolan 2011).

In relation to animal welfare, consumers are seeking products with ethical claims relating to the way in which animals are raised or treated over their lifetime. The purchase of products with animal welfare claims can be considered as an act of ‘ethical consumption’. People can function as consumers, who purchase and consume animal products, and as citizens, who openly express opinions or partake in activities associated with policy and regulation (Coleman et al. 2015). Verbeke et al. (2010) noted that while one can act as a citizen and a consumer simultaneously, these roles may not be closely related with respect to meat production. Those who do eat animal products can act as consumers and citizens in different contexts. Ethical consumerism (Ankeny 2012) attempts to merge these behaviours and typically refers to voluntary food choices made out of concerns for a ‘moral other’ because of a consumer’s values and beliefs. Such behaviours may involve choosing certain foods over others because of perceived ethical superiority or avoiding foods that can be morally problematic. Thus, purchasing meat products which are considered more ethical is a mode of ethical consumption.

Ethically-minded consumers feel morally responsible for the environment and society, and often express their concern through ethical consumption and purchasing (or boycotting) behaviour. These consumers are acting as political consumers with the goal of “changing objectionable institutional or market practices” and are people who “make purchasing decisions in light of political, ethical or environmental considerations” (Copeland 2014). Political consumerism is the selection of producers and products with the aim of changing ethically or politically objectionable market practices (Micheletti and Stolle 2006). Political consumerism includes two types of purchasing activities: boycotting and “*buycotting*” (Micheletti 2011; Micheletti and Stolle 2012). Consumers often boycott products for various reasons, such as the mistreatment of animals. On the other hand, consumers may buycott companies as a reward for preferred behaviour, such as businesses who are organic producers or do not test their products on animals. Political and ethical consumerism also forms part of the idea of ‘sustainable citizenship’ where consumers are expected “to give serious consideration on how their beliefs, policies, and practices might reflect and reproduce social and environmental injustices of the

past (e.g., from legacies of slavery and colonialism) and how their present practise and lifestyles may have a negative effect on the well-being of other humans, nature, and animals today and in the future” (Michelletti and Stolle 2012). It is important to note that ethical consumerism and political consumerism are similar things and both terms are often used interchangeably (Michelletti 2011). Vegan and vegetarian behaviours are examples of the most extreme case of boycotting: avoiding the purchase and consumption of meat and, in the case of vegans, avoiding use of animal products entirely. More recently, there has been a subgroup of ethical vegetarians known as “conscientious omnivores” who consciously avoid “factory-farmed” meats and who “only consume animal flesh that has met certain ethical standards” (Rothgerber 2015).

Attention towards ethical food within popular media and by retailers have increased the public’s interest in ethical meat. Ethical food production and consumption has been evident in popular books including Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006), TV shows such as celebrity chef Jamie Oliver’s *Food Revolution* (Seacrest and Oliver 2010), and films such as *Food, Inc.* (2008), all of which encourage viewers to avoid food products from intensively farmed animals. Retailers have encouraged the rise of ethical claims on food products (Hartleib and Jones 2009) and have “reconceptualise[d] values by promoting particular standards or principles of judgement to apply to food decision-making” (Dixon 2003 pp. 37). The food industry, including large retail companies, continues to refine best-practice standards for animal management, ranging from minor shifts to complete phasing out of some practices, such as the phasing out the use of sow stalls in the pig industry (National Farmers Federation 2013; Coles Supermarket 2016; Woolworths Group 2017). Major financial backing of popular television cooking shows by retailers reinforces their role at the centre of widespread discussion about food production and consumption (Phillipov 2016). It is evident that public interest in ethical food production and consumption has increased through participation of the media and major retailers.

The development of the ethical consumer movement could be a result of an emergent gap between food producers and food consumers, creating an area for concern; consumers are relinquishing the ability to produce their own food which has created “a level of anxiety that indicates how important food connections are” (Coveney 2013, p.46). Such anxiety can be found in the lack of knowledge of the origin of food and how it is produced, contributing to a number of problems including a lack of understanding about animal welfare in livestock production systems. Farm animal welfare is arguably the most contentious issue in international livestock agriculture and is increasingly criticised on ethical grounds (Croney et al. 2012). Conditions under which the animals are raised, how they are transported and slaughtered are some of the things which consumers are concerned (Koknaroglu and Akunal 2013) along with the insufficient information about animal welfare readily available when purchasing animal food products (Vanhonacker et al. 2010).

2.6 How farm animal welfare is governed in Australia

Australia is a federation of states and territories, with each state and territory, along with the federal/national government, holding responsibility for policy across many portfolios including consumer law and agriculture/primary industries. The state and territory governments hold primary responsibility for animal welfare and laws to prevent cases of animal cruelty within Australia's borders (Carey, Parker, and Scrinis 2017; Scrinis, Parker, and Carey 2017), hence federal government policies have historically provided limited protection for farm animals (Scrinis, Parker, and Carey 2017). However, the Australian Government is responsible for international export and trade, and thus are responsible for international agreements relating to animal welfare (Australian Government 2018a) which is important to note when talking about issues relating to the export of live animals. Farm animal production within Australia is guided by 'Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals' which exist for each type of animal and for different stages of throughout the supply chain. There is ongoing work to develop and implement nationally consistent animal welfare standards and guidelines (ibid.). However, many people are concerned about the level of involvement that industry and the government are having in establishing these codes of practice (Goodfellow 2016). The codes of practice are essentially non-mandatory standards that are not legally enforced and do not carry consequences for breaches (Scrinis, Parker and Carey 2017); some groups assert that they exist to simply exempt farm animals from enforceable animal cruelty laws (Bruce and Faunce 2017, Scrinis, Parker and Carey 2017). This approach to governance of animal welfare is a site for contention within Australia, particularly due to the perceived inseparable nature of industry and governmental departments of agriculture, a tension which runs throughout much of the research presented in this dissertation.

2.7 Media and activism

Media and activism are considered to have significant impacts on community and consumer understandings about farm animal welfare and, as this dissertation demonstrates in chapters 3 and 5, the relationship between media and animal welfare activist activities is difficult to disentangle. Over 25 years ago, the philosopher Peter Singer (1975) indicated that the media were doing poorly at educating the public about ethical considerations related to intensive animal farming. Singer argued that media coverage of non-human animals was dominated by human interest events, such as the birth of animals within zoos, while "developments in farming techniques that deprive millions of animals of freedom of movement go unreported" (ibid., p. 216). Since then, media interest in farm animal welfare has increased significantly and has assisted in the creation of a major shift in understandings about farm animal production (Packwood Freeman 2009). Media representation is a powerful way for consumers to create meaning about an issue with which they have little direct experience (Murphy 1991; Gitlin 2003; Packwood Freeman 2009). Urbanisation and the resulting

reduction in the number of people involved in agriculture have contributed to people becoming increasingly reliant on the media for information about the welfare of farm animals raised for food (Singer 2009; Packwood Freeman 2009; Tonsor and Olynk 2011).

The news media facilitates the formulation, refinement and redefinition of concepts open to public consideration and sets a stage for what issues people think about and how they should think about them (Clegg Smith, McLeod and Wakefield 2005). Multiple studies have demonstrated the role that the mass media plays in altering and developing perceptions of scientific issues and participation in science-related issues, such as joining political demonstration or public discussion (Becker et al. 2010; Ho et al. 2011; Anderson et al. 2012). While researchers may disagree about the amount of influence the media has and the mechanisms involved in such influence, a substantial amount of literature suggests that news media can and does influence decision making, perceptions and even behaviour (Gerbner et al. 1982; Gamson 1992; Graber 2009; Croteau, Hoynes, and Milan 2012; Boukes and Boomgaarden 2015) including consumer purchasing decisions (Retzbach and Maier 2015).

Meat purchasing habits are closely tied to media exposure. McKendree, Croney and Windmar (2014) found that recent media attention about pork in the USA resulted in 14 percent of participants having reduced their pork consumption by up to 50 percent due to animal welfare concerns. Similarly, Tonsor and Olynk (2011) found a link between negative animal welfare information presented in the media and a decline in red meat demand in the USA. In Australia, Dole (2017) reported a 15 percent reduction in meat sales due to 'public revulsion' over animal cruelty highlighted within the live export industry. Due to the relationship between media, understandings of animal welfare and meat purchasing behaviour, a framing analysis of Australian newspaper articles is presented in this dissertation (chapter 3).

Activists have an important role in the discussion about farm animal welfare in Australia. Media interest in livestock production is often instigated after an animal activist organisation starts a campaign against an animal industry or practice, or by an adverse event which compromises animal welfare (Coleman 2010; Schoenmaker and Alexander 2012; Tiplady, Walsh, and Phillips 2013; Munro 2014). While traditional campaigning methods such as billboards and protest are still employed by animal activist organisations, technologies such as smart phones and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have transformed the ability for activists to communicate, collaborate and demonstrate globally (Monaghan 2014). More recently Web 2.0 digital media has allowed the sharing of content across multiple platforms including online mainstream news sites. This technology also enables materials and messages to be combined to allow information from celebrities, online journalists, and other bloggers to be disseminated through retweets and sharing (Mummery and Rodan 2017). Monaghan (2014) suggests reasons for the employment of social media include the low cost of online communication, which enables a powerless resistance to organise against a resource-

rich and powerful opposition, the promotion of a joint identity across a dispersed population mobilised by activists in the quest of interests perceived as core to that identity, and the creation of communities that adopt issue-based communication to strengthen the participant's identification with the movement. Social networks have created "a critical force in generating and disseminating information ... especially in situations such as protests, where public activism and media coverage form a key symbiotic relationship" (Ahmed and Jaidka 2013, p. 117).

The symbiotic relationship between media and public activism develops because activist activities often meet media news values. News values are a set of rules by which journalists and editors work, determining when and whether an event becomes newsworthy. Brighton and Foy (2007) describe a matrix system to prioritise events and to filter them into levels of applicability and significance to the audience. Stories become particularly newsworthy when they create a sense of emotional conflict or unrest within the audience. Allern (2002) proposes that sensationalistic stories are more likely to make popular press, particularly as such stories align with commercial news values and cost less to produce which is appealing to "resource-starved and hard-pressed journalists" (Harcup and O'Neill 2017, p. 1473). Schultz (2007) argues that six news values tend to dominate: timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict, sensation and exclusivity. Given that the welfare of farm animals in Australia is of increasing concern, stories which highlight the mistreatment of animals is likely to align with dominant news values as they create an element of conflict and disturbance within their audience and are also highly relevant and timely. Positive news stories about livestock production are much less likely to match dominant news values, particularly in the absence of conflict generated within the audience.

While activists have been of concern to the Australian livestock producing industries for some time, their use of social media has been of particular interest in recent years (Buddle, Bray and Pitchford 2017). In 2011, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's current affairs program 'Four Corners' aired the program *A Bloody Business* (Doyle 2011) which highlighted the mistreatment of Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips 2013). The chief investigator for the activist organisation Animals Australia, Lyn White, obtained footage of the mistreatment and was heavily involved in creating the program. Subsequently, Animals Australia ran an online campaign, creating a website titled 'Ban Live Export' (ibid.) which was quickly endorsed by the lobby group 'GetUp!', launching its most popular web-based petition, receiving 35,000 signatures in just five hours (Schoenmaker and Alexander 2012). The websites of the Royal Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and Animals Australia consequently crashed after receiving 2,000 visits per minute. Animals Australia relied heavily on their Facebook and Twitter profiles to share information during the campaign. This intense web-based activity was supported by traditional media campaigning, and the ultimate suspension of trade to Indonesia was said to be the result of the overwhelming public

response (Munro 2014). While the multi-pronged approach to this campaign contributed to its overall success, there is no doubt that the adoption of social media strategies has changed the mobilisation of activism, adding multi-directionality to communication and giving a greater voice to those wanting change in society (Picard 2015).

Australia's National Farmers Federation (2013) has reported that "it seems clear that the well-resourced and coordinated campaigns waged by animal rights/liberation groups are having an influence on both consumers and retailers seeking a marketing edge" (pp. 53). The livestock production industries suggest that organisations such as Animals Australia "use emotive language to spark rage among people uneducated in farming practices" (Littlely 2015) and regularly reinforce that "animal activists are always on the hunt for images that can move public opinion" (News Limited 2015). This dissertation presents the perspectives of participants regarding animal welfare activism (chapter 5) and highlights activist presence within the print press media to explore how they may influence consumer understandings of farm animal welfare.

2.8 Summary

The issue of farm animal welfare is complex. Although there has been considerable research into physiological measures related to animal welfare, limited research has been conducted to determine what Australian consumers and other social groups think are acceptable ways to produce animals for meat. Researchers from various fields, such as psychology, economics, sociology, media studies and science communication, can help to reveal some parts of the picture using their own methods, and have only begun to skim the surface of the required research into the various understandings of farm animal welfare. This dissertation uses qualitative research methods to uncover the major concerns in relation to farm animal welfare in Australia as communicated through the print press media, as well as direct communication from meat consumers through interviews and focus groups. As will be demonstrated, the issue of farm animal welfare extends far beyond how the animal is treated into issues of food safety and quality and how modern agricultural production ultimately is viewed as putting animal quality of life and death at risk.

Chapter 3 - Framing of farm animal welfare in the Australian print press²

3.1 Introduction

People rely on the media to help them make sense of issues and current affairs, especially controversial issues and those with which they have little or no direct experience. Science and technology issues are examples of where people rely on journalists to provide information and interpretation, particularly when piecing together how the science may impact their daily lives (Kamenova et al. 2016). However, how the media bring together and interpret primary sources of information within a narrative structure, such as a newspaper article, can influence how audiences make sense of an issue by being selective in how information is presented. Therefore, researchers from a variety of disciplines have been interested in how journalists have interpreted and narrated information, and how such narratives have influenced the public discourse and debate around issues of controversy. The current research is interested in how the information from the various meat value chain participants has been pieced together by journalists to create narratives around the issue of farm animal welfare in Australia.

When writing news stories, journalists are required to collate available information, selecting that which they deem important to the narrative and thought to be likely to appeal to their audience. The process of making different pieces of information important within a story is known as framing. Entman (1993) established that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Therefore, framing theory suggests that how an issue is presented influences how people interpret the information. However, frames do not offer fixed meanings: they are flexible and offer a range of positions within the narrative structure (Gamson 1988). This flexibility arises as people bring their own experiences and perspectives when interpreting media messages; therefore they assess and understand media content in different ways. Despite differences in interpretation, framing is an important analytical tool to understand and assess the potential impact that framing issues in certain ways may have on audiences and public discourse in general.

Critics of framing theory claim that the flexibility of frames means framing as an analytical tool is inherently subjective as the researcher approaches the data with their own experiences and

² While it would have been valuable to ask participants of focus groups and interviews specifically about their interaction with traditional media sources such as print press and television, the analysis of newspaper articles presented in this chapter was conducted after the focus groups and interviews were completed. Thus, this research did not capture how participants interacted with traditional media nor did it help to inform which questions were asked in the focus groups and interviews.

perspectives. It is impossible for the researcher to remove themselves entirely from the social and cultural contexts in which they are conducting research. However, the researcher's own experience is an important part of framing analysis as the researcher is embedded within the social and cultural context in which she or he conducts research (e.g., a scientist involved in development of a controversial technology). While it is always possible that another reader will see an alternative frame due to a difference in experience or opinion, there are useful tools which allow researchers to arrive at a common or more accepted dominant frame, such as involving more than one researcher in analysis (Moody 2008). Although researchers bring their own experiences to analysis of media texts, they have established processes to validate their methods, which have proven valuable in identifying culturally important frames within media texts.

The definition of framing often varies from one study to another depending on the research interest. The word 'frame' is often used interchangeably with associated terms such as package, schema, script or theme (Zhou and Moy 2007). The unit of analysis can also vary, including a word, exemplar, metaphor, depiction, catchphrase or visual image (Gamson and Modigliani 1989), a paragraph (Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad 2000), or an entire article (Callaghan and Schnell 2001; Yang 2003). Such discrepancy in defining framing and determining a unit of analysis has resulted in the concept being used in a variety of ways in several disciplines with similar yet unique outcomes. For example, frames may be quantified using a framing typology to determine the number of times certain frames are employed by the media (e.g., Nisbet and Lewenstein 2002). Framing analysis may also be combined with qualitative research methods, such as critical discourse analysis (e.g., McManus and Montoya 2012) or content analysis (e.g., Maynard 2017), to provide greater context of the topic being investigated. The diversity in approaches to framing theory emphasises its importance across disciplines in understanding the potential impact which media frames may have on public understandings of an issue.

Although numerous studies have used media framing to explore issues related to agriculture, the exploration of media framing of animal welfare issues has been limited. The issue which has received the most attention is biotechnology and genetically modified foods, with studies covering various issues across the globe. These studies have examined the change in reporting over time (e.g., Nisbet and Lewenstein 2002; Lore, Imungi, and Mubuu 2013), compared media exposure across two or more countries (e.g., Marks, Kalaitzandonakes, and Zakharova 2003; Bauer 2005; Lewison 2007), and across different types of news media (Carver, Rødland and Breivik 2013) (for an extensive review of media coverage, public perceptions and consumer behaviour in relation to new food technologies, see McCluskey, Kalaitzandonakes and Swinnen 2016). Other studies exploring agricultural issues have included framing of the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis (e.g., Nerlich 2004; Feindt and Kleinschmit 2011), issues in food security (e.g., Mooney and Hunt 2009; Kirwan and Maye 2013), and

use of antibiotics in agriculture (e.g., Morris, Helliwell, and Raman 2016). In relation to the welfare of animals, McManus and Montoya (2012) used framing analysis to understand how jumps racing has been presented in the Australian media, while Graham and McManus (2016) explored representation of the use of whips in horse racing in Australian and UK media. Maynard (2017) uncovered an animal welfare frame in research exploring how zoos and aquariums are represented in the North American print press. Munro (2014) also adopted framing to analyse the media campaign disseminated by social movements in the wake of the 2011 live export scandal. However, there have been no studies which use framing to explicitly explore the variety of concerns within the issue of farm animal welfare. Therefore, the current research uses thematic analysis to identify frames without reference to an existing typology to explore how the issue of farm animal welfare is being discussed in the Australian print media.

3.2 Methods

Newspaper articles were used as the unit of analysis to explore how farm animal welfare is framed within the Australian media. Print media was selected as it remains the most widely available media source and maintains a significant role in framing contemporary issues for mainstream society (Dilworth and McGregor 2015). However, the way in which Australians access print media has changed. As Australians have become increasingly reliant on digital technologies to receive news and current affairs, the number of people sourcing printed newspapers has declined with newspapers having to alter the way in which they deliver content. Although only 41 percent of Australians over the age of 14 regularly read printed newspapers, this number jumps to 65 percent when including those who access newspaper content digitally (Roy Morgan Research 2017); thus print media remain as a relevant source of news and current affairs, even if the way in which consumers access it has changed. Only newspaper articles from major metropolitan newspapers were collected as news stories often spread vertically throughout the media hierarchy, with editors at regional news outlets often referring to larger newspapers to set the national news agenda (Nisbet and Lewenstein 2002). Thus the 20 major metropolitan newspapers were used (as listed in Table 1) as they represent the dominant media discourse across Australia.

Newspaper articles were collected from the Factiva database (www.dowjones.com/products/factiva) from 1st of January, 2014, until the 31st of December, 2016, using “animal welfare” as the key search term. Articles that were not about farm animal welfare, such as those associated with companion animal or wildlife welfare, and those which were duplicate articles were excluded, resulting in 216 articles for analysis. All types of articles, including opinion pieces, were included in the analysis as they are all accessible pieces of information about farm animal welfare.

Collated newspaper articles were subject to thematic analysis to identify key themes. Coding protocol utilised methods similar to 'open-coding' (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Each article was treated as a single unit and read closely to identify the key issue within the article (i.e. whether the article was about live export, free-range production etc.,) how different actors were portrayed, and the salience of the actor's voices. Analysis was conducted by two researchers independently as a form of researcher triangulation to improve research credibility (Nowell 2017), with findings discussed to combine findings into mutually agreed upon themes. Themes which appeared in five or more articles were used in further analysis. Dominant themes were aggregated together to define dominant frames within the articles. All article titles presented in results have been recorded verbatim.

Table 1: The newspapers included in data collection and the state which they are published

Newspaper	State or Territory
The Australian	Nationwide
The Daily Telegraph	New South Wales
Sydney Morning Herald	New South Wales
Sunday Telegraph	New South Wales
The Sun-Herald	New South Wales
Herald Sun	Victoria
The Age	Victoria
Sunday Herald Sun	Victoria
Courier-Mail	Queensland
The Sunday Mail	Queensland
Adelaide Advertiser	South Australia
Sunday Mail	South Australia
West Australian	Western Australia
Weekend West	Western Australia
Sunday Times	Western Australia
The Mercury	Tasmania
Sunday Tasmanian	Tasmania
Northern Territory News	Northern Territory
Sunday Territorian	Northern Territory
The Canberra Times	Australian Capital Territory

3.3 Themes

3.3.1 Government and industry cannot ensure animal welfare in live export

The live export trade has been one of the most debated issues in association with livestock welfare in Australia. Campaigning against live export has been long-standing, beginning with a Senate Inquiry in 1985, followed by several scandals with a minimum of five separate trade suspensions (Morfuni 2011; Nath et al. 2012; Gertel, Le Heron and Le Heron 2016). There has been significant research exploring the anti-live export campaign, including analysis into public response and attitudes toward live export (Howkins and Merricks 2000; Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips 2013); analysis of social media campaigns (Schoenmaker and Alexander 2012; Rikken 2013; Munro 2014; Buddle, Bray and Pitchford 2017); and analysis of media texts using discursive techniques (Fozdar and Spittles 2014; Rolls 2017), all of which have uncovered themes associated with ideas of nationalism, economics and concerns about modern agriculture and underlying values conflicts. Outrage directed towards live export resurfaced during the late stages of writing this dissertation, as video footage of sheep being transported in extremely poor conditions on live export vessels to the Middle East was aired on Australian current affairs program 60 Minutes (Calcutt and Little 2018), sparking fresh calls for closure of the live export trade, particularly the export of live sheep to the Middle East.

The 2011 suspension of the cattle trade to Indonesia (Munro 2014; Petrie 2016) remains the most notorious trade suspension, particularly due to media involvement. The exposé, 'A Bloody Business', which aired on the 30th of May on the current affairs program Four Corners (Doyle 2011), highlighted the mistreatment of cattle in Indonesian abattoirs, and subsequent media attention and public outrage resulted in the trade's suspension (Munro 2014). In response to the outrage generated within and outside of the industry, the Australian Government introduced the Exporters Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) based on four principles: animal welfare, control through the supply chain, traceability through the supply chain and an independent auditing program for importing countries (Australian Government 2016b). Trade to Indonesia was reinstated on the 6th of July 2011 (Petrie 2016), but the country has been involved in several ESCAS breaches since, along with breaches by other importing destinations such as Vietnam and in the Middle East. While articles related to the current public debates are not included in this analysis, the recent interest in live export demonstrates the significance that it has in public rhetoric occurring in Australia about farm animal welfare given it has been a frequently recurring theme in recent years.

Live export was the most widely discussed issue related to farm animal welfare during the collection period of the print press articles used in this research. Live export was the major issue within 114 articles, equating to 52 percent of the total number of articles analysed. Analysis revealed that the government was portrayed as being responsible for poor welfare standards within the industry.

Seventy-two articles were coded to the theme *Government and industry cannot ensure animal welfare in live export* with 30 of these articles being largely centred on breaches of the ESCAS. For example, “Deaths prove live exports still failing, say activists” published in *The Age* on the 18th of January 2014, highlighted that the tightened live export system was still failing to protect the welfare of animals as it reported on deaths at sea of 4,000 sheep destined for the Middle East. This sentiment was also seen in “System fails to stem live export abuse” published in *The West Australian* on the 22nd of January 2015, where review of the ESCAS found “gaping holes in the system” with 59 incidents of non-compliance reported. Similarly, “Shocking cruelty to live cattle exposé” published in *The Daily Telegraph* on the 20th of May 2015, reported on the mistreatment of cattle in Vietnamese abattoirs despite the ESCAS being in place. These articles emphasise that animals are being subjected to poor welfare standards, despite the government’s implementation of the ESCAS.

To further emphasise failings of the Australian Government, breaches to the ESCAS were described as regular occurrences within the supply chain. As seen in “You can’t keep hiding the ugly truth” published in *The Mercury* on the 21st of June 2014, animal abuse was described as the norm within the live export industry, as evidenced by the “frequent revelations of cruelty to Australian livestock in a remarkably broad range of countries”. Journalists also referred to exporters as repeat offenders, as demonstrated in “Live export cruelty spurs campaign” published in *The Canberra Times* on the 16th of November 2014, where animal activists highlighted that the government were not taking appropriate action against “repeat animal mistreatment offenders”. By highlighting that breaches to animal welfare are regular occurrences, these articles further accentuate that, despite implementation of the ESCAS, the government and industry cannot ensure the welfare of live export animals.

Despite involvement of farmers supplying to the live export industry, they remain absent from discussions about failures within the supply chain. Instead, alongside the government, related industry organisations are considered to be responsible for failing welfare standards, as emphasised by the use of quotes from industry representatives rather than from individual farmers. For example, in “Cattlemen blast Gaza ‘disgrace’” published in *The West Australian* on the 9th of May 2014, the Cattle Council of Australia president Andrew Ogilvie described his support for the industry, despite several complaints lodged about alleged ESCAS breaches by Animals Australia. Similarly, in “Cattle trade hit by sledgehammer claims” published in *The Australian* on the 20th of May 2015, the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association chief executive Tracey Hayes claimed the industry had agreed upon additional ESCAS measures to manage and respond to breaches within the markets. Opting to use the voice of industry representatives, rather than individual farmers, suggests to the reader that responsibility for animal welfare lies with industry bodies. Furthermore, by highlighting industry support for the ESCAS despite breaches and system failings, the journalist further emphasises the idea that poor animal

welfare standards within the industry are a function of bigger forces such as the government, rather than the fault of farmers supplying the industry.

In response to reports of animal mistreatment during live export, slaughtering animals in Australia and exporting meat products was offered as a potential alternative to the live export trade. In five articles it was suggested that a chilled meat trade would capitalise on Australia's high animal welfare standards and increase employment opportunities for Australians while still contributing significantly to the economy. For example, in "Anger at plan to reopen live sheep exports" published in *The West Australian* on the 11th of February 2014, animal activists emphasised that the re-opening of live export markets would not only cause animal suffering but would hinder the meat processing industry in Australia. Similarly, in "Iran deal to boost live exports" published in *The West Australian* on the 29th of May 2014, the government was reported to be opening live export trade to Iran despite continued reports of animal cruelty, with the RSPCA suggesting that the best welfare outcome for animals would be for them to be slaughtered in Australia to Australian standards. This sentiment was also seen in "Prices up, but what about value-adding?" published in *The Australian* on the 8th of November 2014, where the journalist questioned whether the live export industry is good for the Australian economy or if it was depriving the country of value-added income and jobs through 'cannibalism' of the local meat processing sector. By making note of the viable alternative chilled meat trade, while emphasising Australia's high standards of animal welfare, these articles lead the audience to question why the live export industry remains operational despite continued breaches to animal welfare standards.

3.3.2 Government definition of free-range eggs is not good for animal welfare

In late 2014, consumer advocacy group Choice mounted a campaign for a national definition of free-range eggs which "meets consumers' clear expectations" (para. 7) and to "stop egg producers duping shoppers" (para. 1) (McKeith 2014). Subsequently, at the beginning of 2015, Australian state and federal consumer affairs ministers introduced a mandatory information standard for free-range eggs (Carey, Parker and Scrinis 2017). This definition was to establish a labelling standard to bring consistency across egg products, and as such all state and territory consumer affairs ministers were involved in determining a National Information Standard on free-range eggs (Australian Government 2017). However, the objective driving the establishment of such standards had changed to incorporate "giv[ing] more information to consumers" and "reduc[ing] the regulatory uncertainty faced by egg producers and encourage[ing] investment within the industry" (Australian Government 2016c, quoted in Carey, Parker and Scrinis 2017 pp. 266). All ministers, except Greens ACT Senator Shane Rattenbury, agreed upon these standards in March 2016 (Han 2016) and the standards came into effect on the 28th of April 2018 (Australian Government 2018a). Under this standard, egg producers are not legally permitted to use the words 'free-range' on their product unless they were laid by hens which had meaningful and regular access outside during daylight hours during the laying cycle, the ability to roam

and forage outdoors and were raised using a stocking density of 10,000 hens or less per hectare with the stocking density prominently displayed on the packaging or signage (Australian Government 2018a).

Establishment of the National Information Standard on free-range eggs occurred during the data collection period for this research. Within 26 articles coded to *Government definition of free-range is not good for animal welfare*, the definition was severely criticised. The National Information Standard was often positioned against that contained within the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Domestic Poultry 4th Edition, produced by the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) (hence referred to as the CSIRO standard within the articles) (CSIRO 2002) and endorsed by the RSPCA, which recommended much lower stocking densities of 1,500 birds per hectare than that within the National Information Standard. For example, in “States agree on free range eggs” published in *The Australian* on the 31st of March 2016, the journalist emphasised that the free-range label should signify high animal welfare standards with genuinely free-ranging chickens, as allowed by the 1,500 bird per hectare standard, not an intensive farming operation. Similarly, in “Push for rethink of ‘free-range’ standards” published in *The Canberra Times* on the 31st of March 2016, Greens Senator Shane Rattenbury (ACT) suggested that the free-range definition should only be applied to outdoor stocking densities of up to 1,500 birds per hectare. While these articles also suggested that the ‘meaningful access’ clause within the standards is ‘rubbish’ as free-range should mean that hens ‘actually go outside’, emphasis remained on stocking densities. As both the RSPCA and the CSIRO are respected organisations, positioning their definition of free-range against the definition defined under the Consumer Act suggests to the reader that the government definition falls short in ensuring animal welfare.

In a similar way to live export, government and industry were seen as closely aligned in articles about free-range eggs. While the National Information Standard was agreed upon by a collective of state and territory ministers, emphasis was placed on the involvement that industry had advising on and developing the standards. For example, “How Big Egg is winning free-range fight as chickens get ‘meaningful outdoor access’” published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on the 29th of March 2016, reported that the National Information Standard had been established in the interest of larger egg producers to capitalise on a price premium earned by smaller farmers. Support for the legal standard from industry was also highlighted in “Free-range eggs ‘to stay affordable’” published in *The Australian* on the 31st of March 2016, where the CEOs of the National Farmers Federation and of New South Wales Farmers both welcomed the standards. Emphasising industry support, while arguing that such standards do not meet consumer expectations, these articles suggest to readers that government and industry are colluding to introduce standards considered unacceptable for animal welfare, despite consumer concerns.

3.3.3 Government and industry put profit before animal welfare

Economic rationale and potential profits were often used by government and industry representatives as justifications for industry practice or production definitions. Of 114 articles about live export, only three were written in defence of the industry and these were written by industry or government representatives. Within these articles, contributions that the industry makes to the Australian economy and increased potential profit available by growing the industry were used as justifications for the live export industry's existence. For example, in "Beef on live exports a bit woolly" published in *The Australian* on the 24th of January 2014, Federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Barnaby Joyce opened his article by stating that "Australia is at the forefront of improving animal husbandry practices when it comes to looking after beasts" and followed by discussing the economic importance of Australia's agricultural exports. Similarly, in "Ham-fisted, but live export crisis has turned the tide" published in *The Australian* on the 23rd of April 2014, economic contributions of the live export trade to the Australian economy were outlined, while describing Australia as the only country, of 109 countries exporting globally, that invests in animal welfare beyond its borders. Furthermore, within nine different articles about live export, economic justification was used to argue for an increase in the number of animals exported, or the opening/reopening of trade to some countries. For example, in "Welfare probe with \$1b export target" published in *The West Australian* on the 9th of July 2014, industry welcomed an increase in trade, increasing the value of the industry from \$300 million to \$1 billion, while animal activists argued that such value is insignificant in comparison to value of the chilled meat trade. These articles emphasised that the industry was interested growth and higher returns ahead of animal welfare. For example, in "Rule change tipped to trigger export surge" published in *The West Australian* on the 1st of March 2014, Barnaby Joyce described a potential surge within the industry as "people like to make a quick buck". By presenting the industry's financial imperative alongside discussions of continued ESCAS breaches these articles emphasise to readers that the industry and government consider profits above animal welfare.

Government and industry interest in financial gains over animal welfare was also emphasised in the free-range egg definition debate. Farmers who adhered to the 1,500 birds per hectare standard were often described as 'genuine' farmers and victims as opposed to those operating under 10,000 birds per hectare. For example, in both "Fears over free range density rule" published in *The Age* on the 29th of March 2016, and "Free range egg brand being 'hijacked'" published in *The Canberra Times* on the 29th of March 2016, free-range egg farmers employing lower stocking densities were described as "genuine free-range farmers" who have "worked hard...to build up a brand that has integrity", a brand which has been hijacked because supermarkets and "Big Egg" want a price premium which "they haven't earned". Similarly, in "Free range eggs to stay affordable, farmers say" published in *The Australian* on the 1st of April 2016, consumer advocacy group Choice was quoted as being outraged by

how the National Information Standard defined free-range, accusing producers using stocking densities of 10,000 hens per hectare as “ripping consumers off by between \$21 and \$43 million a year”, while the RSPCA suggested the legal definition failed to provide the animal welfare assurances consumers seek. By explaining that “Big Egg” only want to capitalise on the free-range price premium earned by “genuine free-range farmers”, these articles suggest that establishing the National Information Standard was driven by financial interests over animal welfare.

3.3.4 Activists exposé industry’s animal welfare failures

Animal welfare activists had a central role in many of the articles examined in this research and were considered responsible for exposing industry wrongdoings within the live export industry and intensive animal agriculture. Activists featured significantly in articles about live export and were often reported to be obtaining video footage of animal mistreatment in slaughterhouses in importing countries. Suspension of trade to particular countries was attributed to work carried out by animal activists. For example, “Joyce hits out on cattle deaths” published in *The West Australian* on the 21st of May 2015, reports that two Vietnamese importers had been suspended, unable to receive Australian cattle after allegations of animals being bludgeoned with sledgehammers during slaughter after it had been filmed and released by activists. While Minister Joyce claimed the matter had been under investigation long before activist involvement, Animals Australia and government opposition were quoted saying that the public would not have known about such animal mistreatment without the work of activists. Similarly, in “Death hammer” published in *The Herald Sun* on the 17th of June 2016, industry were noted to have suspended supply of Australian cattle to three Vietnamese abattoirs, with such action attributed to video footage obtained by Animals Australia. By highlighting involvement of activists in exposing animal mistreatment alongside the failures in ESCAS as described above, these articles emphasise that activists are an integral part of ensuring animal welfare standards are maintained.

The work of activists in obtaining footage of poor welfare conditions in Australia within intensive piggeries and broiler sheds was instrumental in closure of operations which violate animal welfare. For example, in “Animal cruelty activists targeted” published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on the 16th of June 2014, activists were considered responsible for recording horrific treatment which led to the closure of a piggery in Yass, New South Wales. While acknowledging potential biosecurity breaches which activists may have caused by entering the property, the article emphasised that the work of activists is important in exposing potential acts of animal abuse. Such footage was considered to be the reason for dramatic changes in consumer attitudes towards animal production and for supermarkets to begin focusing on products which meet particular animal welfare standards. For example, in “Pork industry expects exodus of old piggeries” published in *The Canberra Times* on the 20th of January 2014, the journalist described images obtained by animal activists as informing consumers who are in turn influencing supermarkets to establish new animal welfare standards for

producers. By accentuating the involvement of activists in exposing animal mistreatment within intensive livestock industries, these articles justify the existence of animal activist organisations and reiterate that industry is unable to independently manage animal welfare.

3.3.5 Ethical production is better for animal welfare

Ethical production methods, such as free-range and grass-fed, were suggested by journalists to be better for animal welfare because animals are able to perform “natural behaviours” due to having outdoor access. For example, in “Nothing intensive about free-range pork” published in *The West Australian* on the 6th of March 2014, the journalist highlighted that restricted movement caused by farrowing crates and sow stalls were considered unacceptable by consumers, resulting in a reduction of pork consumption, and emphasising that free-range production methods are better for animal welfare. Similarly, in “Save ethical wagyu from misplaced bull” published in *The Herald Sun* on the 17th of August 2015, production systems which allow animals to roam and graze were described as better for animal welfare in comparison to animals kept in feedlots and fed a grain-based diet. Articles within this theme clearly associated the ability for animals to express natural grazing behaviours with higher standards of animal welfare. By emphasising that animal confinement limits the animals’ abilities to express natural behaviours, and positioning alternative, production systems such as free-range and grass-fed as more ethical, these articles highlight to readers that such production methods are better for animal welfare.

The voices of individual farmers were particularly salient in articles about ethical production systems. The media associated free-range and grass-fed production methods with higher standards of animal welfare and used voices of farmers who produce using such methods to emphasise the idea of quality and care. For example, in “Fine food’s hot to trot” published in *The Herald Sun* on the 23rd of April 2014, free range producer Belinda Hagan stated that ethical producers “play an important role in food security, land rehabilitation and animal welfare”. Similarly, in “Beefing up welfare” published in *The Courier Mail* on the 29th of May 2015, Queensland grazier Deb McBride states: “it is quite simple – happy, contented cattle produce good quality beef”. Gibson and Zillman (1993) suggest that using direct quotes can be a powerful journalistic tool to influence the audiences’ perceptions of the issue. Similarly, particular representations of individuals or groups within new stories can be linked to certain ideologies or existing social norms (Amer 2017). As will be outlined in chapter 4.1, Australians hold a great deal of trust within farmers. Within the media, farmers have become central to the representations of what constitutes ‘good’ food and ‘good’ food production (Phillipov 2017a). In this case, individual farmers, particularly ethical farmers, are represented as caring for animal welfare which draws on the preconceived idea that Australian farmers are trustworthy. By using quotes direct from farmers describing their dedication to animal welfare tie these articles within the theme by

emphasising the assumed social trust in farmers in Australia and by highlighting that farmers using ethical production methods care about animal welfare.

Chefs and butchers were often positioned in the news story to emphasise that ethical production methods produce better-quality products. For example, in “Pleased to meat you” published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on the 5th of July 2016, journalists highlighted that butchers sell superior quality meat products produced using methods such as free-range or grass-fed. Sydney “foodies” were described as rediscovering artisan butchers offering ‘old-fashioned service’ and gourmet produce. The article showcased a variety of butchers who “know their suppliers and ensure that everything has been raised in the most humane way possible” and “source pasture-raised stock from sustainably managed farms”. Similarly, in “A beefy deal gets start at the races” published in *The West Australian* on the 20th of June 2016, chef Dan Masters explained how it was difficult to find a beef producer who shared his restaurant’s ethos of good animal welfare until he was introduced to beef producer Chantel Prowse who was able to offer a “unique...paddock-to-plate story” with her 100 percent grass-fed beef which “eats beautifully”. In these articles, butchers and chefs are considered experts, not just because they provide advice on product preparation and quality attributes, but they are considered experts in animal welfare. By using butchers and chefs to promote ethically-raised meat, journalists suggest that ethical production methods are able to provide a better-quality product endorsed by experts.

3.3.6 Retailers are responding to consumer concerns about animal welfare

Until recently Australia’s retail sector has been dominated by two major players – Coles³ and Woolworths – who have been active in the promotion of animal welfare friendly products. Under their responsible sourcing policies (see <https://www.coles.com.au/corporate-responsibility/sustainability/responsible-sourcing>), Coles supermarkets emphasise that their pork is sow-stall free and produced without artificial growth promotants, their branded chicken is RSPCA-approved, their branded eggs are cage-free and their branded beef is hormone-free. Woolworths supermarkets go further by outlining their ethical sourcing policies in relation to animal welfare (see https://www.woolworthsgroup.com.au/page/community-and-responsibility/group-responsibility/responsible-sourcing/Animal_Welfare/ for more). Both supermarket chains have been active in the promotion of more ethical animal products, often using celebrity chefs such as Curtis Stone and Jamie Oliver to endorse positive animal welfare claims.

The movement by retailers and large food companies to position themselves as champions of consumer concern was highlighted in 10 articles. For example, in “Coles chooks get RSPCA nod”⁴

³ Coles Pty Ltd were a partner on the grant which supported this research, however the research was conducted independently of the partners.

⁴ “Chook” is an Australian slang term used to describe a chicken.

published in *The Herald Sun* on the 3rd of January 2014, the supermarket's move to using only RSPCA-approved chicken in their branded product was attributed to the growing concern consumers have for animal welfare. Similarly, in "So here's my beef with beef..." published in *The Age* on the 11th of November 2014, feedlotting was presented as having a negative impact on welfare as it is associated within the article with factory farming methods and highlights that both Coles and Woolworths supermarkets were beginning to source grass-fed beef as an alternative, further positioning them within the article as responsive to consumer concerns. Fast food chains were also described as responding to consumer concerns. As seen in "Hungry to be uncaged" published in *The Herald Sun* on the 12th of February 2016, fast food restaurant Hungry Jacks was reported to have removed caged eggs from their menu, following the likes of other fast food restaurants McDonalds and Subway. By emphasising decisions of these large multinational companies to sell products that are perceived to be better for farm animal welfare, these articles position such companies as responsive towards consumer concerns and therefore as champions for animal welfare.

3.3.7 If you care for animal welfare, you should reduce or stop meat consumption

Reducing or abstaining from meat consumption was proposed in print press articles as a way to alleviate concerns about animal welfare. Many of the articles coded to this theme were written as opinion pieces and the authors often claimed to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet out of concern for animal welfare. For example, in "Vegetarianism debate should give us food for thought" published in *The Courier Mail* on the 9th of January 2014, the journalist suggested that over indulgence in meat encourages use of factory farming production methods, while proposing that a reduction in meat consumption either by participating in Meat Free Monday or by following a vegetarian diet can make a difference for animal welfare and human health. Similarly, in "More humane treatment for creatures great and small" published in *The Courier Mail* on the 28th of August 2014, even slight reductions in meat consumption, such as participating in Meat Free Mondays, were reported to have a positive impact on animal welfare due to a reduction in perceived animal suffering. These articles offer potential solutions to readers eager to alleviate their concerns about animal welfare, particularly by highlighting initiatives such as Meat Free Monday or vegetarian diets as strategies to reduce the suffering of farm animals.

3.4 Frames

The results of thematic analysis presented above reveal two dominate frames within the articles analysed that operated across the particular issues. Themes relating to live export and free-range egg labelling and the work of activists aligned to a broader frame, namely that industry and government collectively cannot be trusted to ensure animal welfare in animal production. Themes relating to ethical production systems alongside retailers working to meet consumer expectations in relation to

animal welfare and promotion of meat-reducing strategies together highlighted that readers can make a difference to animal welfare through modes of ethical consumption. These frames are discussed in detail below.

3.4.1 Industry and government cannot be trusted with farm animal welfare

The largest frame to emerge from the corpus was that the livestock industry and the Australian Government, collectively, cannot be trusted to ensure farm animal welfare. The themes described above highlighted continued breaches of the ESCAS within live export industries and free-range egg labelling standards as being more closely aligned with ideals of a profit-driven industry and the involvement of activists in exposing cases of animal mistreatment within intensive production and processing facilities. In light of these issues, amongst others, there have been an increasing number of public accusations made by politicians and animal welfare advocates about the conflict of interest which exists within the Australian departments of agriculture in regulating farm animal welfare. Such conflict is described by 'regulatory capture' theory which explains the process that occurs when a regulatory body, such as the government, acts in the interest of an industry which it is charged with regulating in a way that is incompatible with the public interest of which the regulation is designed to serve (Mitnick 1980; Briody and Prenzler 1998; Goodfellow 2016). In Australia, agricultural industries have historically followed productivist ideals (Voyce 2007; Fielke and Bardsley 2015) and due to their significance to the Australian economy they have substantial political influence (Chen 2016c; Carey, Parker and Scrinis 2017). Careful empirical analysis by Goodfellow (2016) has shown that Australian departments of agriculture have "deviated from serving the public interest in farm animal welfare" as a consequence of regulatory capture by Australian livestock industries (pp. 229). This author argues that this capture occurred because Australian state and territory, and federal governments have a dual-fold responsibility in promoting the agricultural industry's prosperity and productivity, whilst regulating the industry to serve public interest (Carey, Parker and Scrinis 2017; also see Australian Government 2016a). It is clearly evident from the current media analysis (and the rest of this dissertation) that there is significant public concern mounting regarding the quality of animal lives within livestock production, and the current regulatory environment continues to fall short of ensuring acceptable standards of animal welfare.

This dual-fold responsibility of the government was reported as having an impact within the live export industry and in relation to free-range egg labelling standards by print press articles. Goodfellow (2016) highlights that regulatory failures have been particularly prevalent within the agricultural industry in recent years and contends that, although there is no national data recorded on such failures, anecdotal evidence from animal advocacy organisations, media reports and the government suggest there are regular failures, and in the case of live export, failures are routine. For example, Carey, Parker and Scrinis (2017) used the free-range egg labelling Information Standard to highlight regulatory capture

of those charged with policy decision making in relation to farm animal welfare by the agricultural industry, while also reflecting the existing power structure in the retail sector. In practice, farm animal welfare and on-farm productivity exist in a state of conflict. As a result, departments of agriculture have competing responsibilities in promoting a productive and prosperous agricultural industry whilst protecting and promoting farm animal welfare.

However, as Goodfellow (2016) describes, the government acting both as ‘industry cheerleader’ and ‘industry policeman’ does not itself create conflict of interest; instead difficulties arise when deciding which responsibility the government should prioritise. Regulation may serve industry interests as it is able to create an equitable and stable environment in which to do business, and safeguards against external risks. Similarly, industry productivity may be in the public interest as it may increase economic stability, generate increased employment opportunities etc. Tension arises due to conflict in responsibilities, especially when positioned against the agency’s main goal – “If one objective is unduly prioritised over another it can affect agency performance with regard to the subordinate responsibility” (ibid., pp. 208). The government’s primary goal is to act in the public’s best interest, both for people within and outside of agricultural industries. However, departments of agriculture within Australia, as emphasised in print press articles sourced for this research, are considered to prioritise the productivity and economic prosperity of industry over conditions in which livestock animals are produced, despite significant public concern. In particular, as Biber (2009) and Barkow (2010) point out, businesses prioritise short term, easy-to-measure economic goals at the demise of more elusive social goals which serve public interest. As demonstrated in the print press articles used in this research, the media is bringing the dysfunction of the government’s dual responsibility to attention, particularly as both industry and government continue to use economic justification for what many of the public consider to be unacceptable welfare conditions, leaving animal welfare to be unduly compromised. There are a number of reforms proposed to assist in overcoming the issues associated with regulatory imbalance, such as the separation of competing responsibilities or introducing a regulatory contrarian (Goodfellow 2016). These ideas are explored in greater detail in chapter 5.

3.4.2 Consumers can make a difference to animal welfare through “ethical consumption”

A smaller, yet equally important, frame which emerged from the articles highlighted that the reader, as a consumer, can make a difference to the welfare of livestock animals through ethical consumption. Themes which attributed to this frame included the idea that free-range and grass-fed production methods are more ‘ethical’ as they provide better standards of animal welfare, highlighting that these ethical products are being made readily available by large retailers. As described in chapter 2, ethical consumerism (Ankeny 2012) generally refers to voluntary food choices which are made in relation to concerns for ‘a moral other’ as associated to a consumer’s values and beliefs. Such behaviours include

selecting certain foods over others because of a perceived ethical superiority or avoiding foods that be morally problematic (Bray and Ankeny 2017). Scholarly views towards ethical consumption often consider associated consumer activities as legitimate ways for alleviating social, ethical and civic concerns (Littler 2008; Lewis 2012; Phillipov 2017c). Modes of ethical consumption in relation to farm animal welfare include purchasing meat through alternative food networks, such as butchers or farmers market, selecting more ethical products such as free-range or grass-fed meat, or ultimately abstaining from meat or animal products. All of these were suggested by journalists in the articles within this research as ways in which their readers can address their concerns in relation to farm animal welfare.

This frame fits within much broader discussions about ethical production and consumption in media in developed countries. The media have become an important part of the ethical consumption discourse, acting as an intermediary for different parties, circulating opinions within the public domain (Gong 2013). As noted previously, promotion of ethical consumption is seen in a range of popular books, TV shows and films, all of which encourage their audience to avoid food products from intensively farmed animals, often encouraging consumers to opt for ethical products raised on small-scale farms using traditional farming methods. As Phillipov (2017c) describes, these forms of popular food media “offer a vision for a new, ‘better’ food system” where “a sinister ‘Other’ [is staged] against... ‘good’ food practices” from “idyllic pastoral scenes invoking notions of tradition, authenticity and pleasure” (pp. 32).

Within the media, there have been a recurring set of representations which build specific ideas about what constitutes ‘good’ food and ‘good’ food production, particularly those based on authenticity, place, nostalgia and a sense of connection between producer and consumer (Phillipov 2017a). The farmer remains central within these representations, often seen to be enjoying a happy, relaxed lifestyle while content with his or her life dedicated to ‘traditional’ methods of food production. Representations of the farmer within the print press articles used in this research are typical of the genre conventions and context of the media industries, alongside a commitment to ethical consumption (ibid.). Farmer voices were used in opposition to big industry and were often presented as victims of the regulatory capture of the government as previously explained. Farmers themselves are used to represent a notion of the nostalgic, traditional production methods which previous media texts have been so committed to emphasising, so much so that these idyllic farmers are being reinforced within the Australian print press media as the ones to trust within the food supply chain.

What is particularly striking about the current research is the positioning of supermarkets as champions for animal welfare within the print press articles in this research. Supermarkets are usually portrayed as the face of industrial food, often subjected to significant amounts of criticism for their negative impacts on food consumption and production (Phillipov 2017b). Farmers, politicians and the

media have all previously criticised the operations of Coles and Woolworths. They have also been subjected to stricter regulations, with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) completing several investigations into grocery prices and treatment of suppliers since 2008 (Phillipov 2016). Similarly, in 2011, Coles and Woolworths were the subject of a Senate Inquiry, investigating the broader impacts on the dairy industry by selling their branded milk at a significantly discounted \$1 per litre (ibid.). These investigations each received significant media coverage, with particular emphasis on how farmers and the Australian agricultural industry was being impacted by the major supermarkets (ibid.). On the back of these investigations, *The Australian Financial Review* reported that a long-running survey of Australian consumer sentiment highlighted a drastic rise in consumer frustration with Coles and Woolworths, with distrust in the major retailers rising to 72 percent (McIntyre 2012). However, supermarkets remain the most common way for Australians to purchase food, and major financial backing of popular television shows in Australia, such as 'My Kitchen Rules' and 'Masterchef', reinforces the retailer's role at the centre of widespread discussion about food production and consumption (Phillipov 2016). Carey, Parker and Scrinis (2017) highlight the power supermarkets have in relation to influencing farm animal welfare policy, using the development of the free-range egg Information Standard as an example. The authors highlight that both Coles and Woolworths had set standards for free-range eggs prior to the introduction of the Industry Standard, which the authors argue "underpinned the egg industry's proposed definition" (ibid p. 273). Despite negativity which has previously surrounded Australia's major retailers, the current research shows a very different view towards supermarkets reflected in newspaper media coverage, perhaps due to the heavy reliance which newspapers have on large advertisers such as supermarkets. Unlike previous criticisms of supermarkets, the current analysis suggests that they are champions of animal welfare and are responding to consumer concerns, rather than being implicated in causing poor animal welfare.

Concern for the way in which food is produced and distributed, and the rise of the ethical food movement, have placed pressures on conventional retailers to stock more ethical products (Phillipov 2017c). In turn, retailers have encouraged the rise of ethical claims on food products (Hartleib and Jones 2009) and have "reconceptualise[d] values by prompting particular standards or principles of judgement to apply to food decision-making" (Dixon 2003, p. 37). Demand for more ethical products has resulted in supermarkets using their prominent power and position in the food system to increase their offering of range of such products (Freidberg 2004; Burch and Lawrence 2005; Friedmann 2005; McMichael and Friedmann 2007; Scrinis, Parker and Carey 2017). As demonstrated by the corpus of articles in the current research, retailers continue to define best practice standards for animal management and introduce alternative products to their shelves, with such decisions often being framed as responses to consumer concerns. Instead of continuing to position retailers as a "sinister

‘Other’” (Phillipov 2017c, p. 32), journalists (at least within this corpus) have positioned them as champions for animal welfare, or more specifically, as champions for consumer concern.

The ultimate way for a consumer to avoid causing harm to farm animals, albeit extreme for some, is to completely abstain from the consumption of animal products. Encouragement in the print press articles in this research fits within the broader rhetoric and popularity of plant-based diets in developed countries. Meat consumption has received significant public scrutiny, particularly in relation to health problems such as obesity, cancer and heart disease, along with environmental degradation and animal welfare (Singer 2017). Documentaries, such as *Cowspiracy* (Anderson and Kuhn 2014) and *Food, Inc.* (Kenner and Pearlstein 2006), alongside the news media which promotes ethical consumption listed above, have emphasised how corporate agribusiness, particularly those involved in animal agriculture, have contributed to environmental degradation and poor animal welfare. While some argue that the media often casts a negative image on veganism (Cole and Morgan 2011; Masterman-Smith, Ragusa, and Crampton 2014), more recent research suggests that, although the media continues to “marginalise ethical, political veganism”, the media is shifting towards promotion of the “fashionable trend of the plant-based diet for aesthetic and health reasons” (Lundahl 2017, p. 81). In turn, as described in chapter 1, meat consumption is becoming an increasingly reflexive practice, with a plethora of meat reducing strategies being explored by many consumers as demonstrated by reports indicating that many Australians are following those in many other developed countries by reducing their meat consumption for health reasons, amongst concerns for the environment and animal welfare (Roy Morgan Research 2016). Moral considerations, such as concerns for another’s wellbeing including non-human animals, or personal factors, such as attention to health or well-being, are often cited as reasons for the re-evaluation of one’s meat consumption (De Backer and Hudders 2014). All of these considerations featured in the print press articles used in this research, which encouraged readers to participate in initiatives such as Meat Free Monday or embrace a completely meat-free diet as a mode of ethical consumption.

3.5 Summary

This research demonstrates how the issue of farm animal welfare is communicated within the Australian print press in such a way that suggests not only what the public should think about these issues, but how they should think about them. This framing analysis suggests that the issues surrounding farm animal welfare are being made public in Australia through two dominant frames: that industry and government collectively cannot be trusted with animal welfare, and that consumers need to act through ethical consumption. These findings also demonstrate that large multinational food companies, including supermarkets, are portrayed within the print press media as champions for consumers and animal welfare in this instance, unlike other reported media representations of such entities (McIntyre 2012). ‘Ethical’ farmers were also positioned in opposition to industry, emphasising

that individual farmers are victims of the system. This finding is particularly interesting as farmers are essentially the industry, yet the print press articles create a distinction between farmers and the industry. This may be in relation to the broader social discourse relating to concerns for big business, particularly corporate agribusiness. Overall, this chapter highlights how the issue of animal welfare is being communicated to the Australian public, particularly through a popular means such as the print press, helping to answer some of the research questions. However, despite the popularity and importance of the media as a source of information about food production and animal welfare, a direct causal connection cannot be drawn between what is presented in the print press media and consumer understandings of farm animal welfare, and vice versa (Lockie 2006). The media are deeply entangled within people's everyday lives, becoming one of the "social forces that produce popular common sense, the general social beliefs and feelings of a society" which in turn influence the construction and production of media (O'Shaughnessy, Stadler and Casey 2016, p. 53). O'Shaughnessy, Stadler and Casey (ibid) describe the media to be "[l]ike the chicken and the egg, [as] there is no simple answer as to which comes first – media representations or popular common sense – the two are permanently intertwined" (p. 53). The findings presented in the following chapter highlight this intertwined relationship, with many themes uncovered in the media repeated within the focus group and interview data. The following chapter presents findings of focus groups and interviews to explore more directly how Australian meat consumers understand the issue of farm animal welfare.

Chapter 4 - Australian meat consumers' understandings of farm animal welfare

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results from focus groups and interviews that were conducted to explore Australian meat consumers' understandings of farm animal welfare. The scripts used in interviews and focus groups were structured to encourage participants to think about various aspects of the meat production process (for a full copy of the script, see Appendix 1). In economics and agriculture, these stages are linked together and described as a 'value chain'. The term value chain describes the process in which a raw product, in this case the animal, is transformed into an end product, in this case the meat which is consumed. The meat value chain can be pictured as involving different participants including the producer, processor, retailer and consumer (Guy, Brown and Banks 2018). Although participants of the current research did not explicitly talk about the value chain, there was underlying evidence that they knew about the various types of participants involved in meat production and discussed how these different participants impact upon one another. For ease of analysis and discussion, the results are separated into three major sections of the value chain: the farm, transport and slaughter, and the product. The major themes which emerge are briefly discussed in each sub-chapter, and results are drawn together within a summarising chapter of the thesis (chapter 6). Although there is also interaction across stages, such as between what happens on the farm and meat quality, the way in which these results are presented was considered to be logical and provided a platform to discuss participant perspectives regarding animal welfare.

This research began by focusing solely on consumer understandings of sheep and beef cattle welfare. However, during focus groups and interviews, it became clear that there was a greater amount of concern for the welfare of chickens and pigs, primarily because of the perceived differences in production methods in that sheep and beef cattle are raised in more traditional farming systems whereas chickens and pigs are reared in modern, intensive systems. This chapter presents evidence to support such claims, highlighting how various participants in the meat value chain are involved in putting an animal's quality of life at risk.

4.2 Methods

The research was conducted in Adelaide, South Australia (population of approximately 1.2 million); Melbourne, Victoria (population of approximately 4.65 million); and Toowoomba, Queensland (population of approximately 115,000). These locations were selected to explore whether there were any noteworthy differences between urban settings, both in large and average-sized cities such as Melbourne and Adelaide, and in regional centres such as Toowoomba. Focus groups and 'mall-

intercept' interviews (Bush and Hair 1985) were used to collect data, with the latter used primarily to provide a balance in the overall sample in terms of demographics, particularly socioeconomic status. Mall-intercept interviews occurred within metropolitan shopping centres in Melbourne, Toowoomba and Adelaide often within the vicinity of a major supermarket. Participants of focus groups were recruited through community announcements, social media announcements and flyers distributed at public events. This research endeavoured to explore the understandings of meat consumers towards the welfare of sheep and beef cattle in Australia as they directly contribute to the meat value chain. Hence, only those who identified as meat eaters, and who were over the age of 18 and who could speak English, were eligible to participate in the study. Overall, 66 meat consumers from across Australia participated in the research during 2015 and 2016.

Of the 66 participants in the research, 70 percent were women. Ages were categorised and ranged from 18-24 years to over 65, with the lowest represented group being 55-64 years (n=5) and the highest represented group being 18-24 (n=18). Forty-eight percent were married or in a de facto relationship and 42 percent had children. Thirty-seven percent were not currently working (which included those who were currently studying). Thirty-one percent were surveyed in Melbourne, Victoria; 19 percent in Toowoomba, Queensland; and 50 percent in Adelaide, South Australia. The educational profile of participants was mixed: 6 percent had completed primary school, 21 percent had completed secondary school, 12 percent had a vocational qualification, 33 percent had completed a university degree and 24 percent had completed postgraduate education, with 28 percent studying either full or part time at the time of the research. Despite having a large percentage of female participants, the sample was varied in many other demographic variables. However, the sample may not be representative of Australia's highly multicultural population as majority of the participants were of Anglo-Celtic decent. The number of participants whom had postgraduate education was also slightly higher than the Australian average (7.7 percent) but this is typical of university-based studies, hence the use of mall-intercept interviews to help even the distribution of demographics.

Focus groups and interviews were structured and included a series of discussion points about the welfare of sheep and beef cattle (Appendix 1). Questions were open-ended to allow people to express their thoughts and use their own preferred concepts and language, rather than restricting responses by giving a selection of predetermined answers from which to select. The use of open-ended questions without prompted answers enables greater understanding about which issues are most important to participants and allows them to reflect on their experiential knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Asking each participant the same basic questions provides a foundation to aid in the comparison of results.

In an effort to prevent bias and allow for free discussion, no attempt was made to correct empirical statements about animal agriculture which were incorrect. The interviewers were not trying to provide

facts or evidence about animal agriculture to participants during interviews, therefore readers who are familiar with various animal production practices may notice inconsistencies and even errors within participants' responses

Focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded, then fully transcribed, anonymised and checked for accuracy against handwritten notes. Transcripts were treated as rich, narrative texts and coded using methods similar to 'open-coding' (Strauss and Corbin 1990) using NVivo (Richards 2005) and themes were reviewed by a second researcher to ensure validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a number of ways to improve research credibility including researcher triangulation and engaging in peer debriefing to provide a check on the research and analysis process. Thus engaging a second researcher was to increase the credibility of the analysis (Nowell et al. 2017). The methods used in this research are not strictly based on traditional grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990), but instead use the generic inductive qualitative model (Maxwell 2005; Hood 2007) which is a flexible approach to qualitative research as it allows the research findings to emerge from reoccurring and important themes within the data, without being restricted by a tradition-specified qualitative approach (Thomas 2006, Liu 2016). The generic inductive qualitative model also allows for purposeful sampling including demographic-based recruitment, thus strengthening the ability to generalise across populations and to other locations. Quotes used in the results have been reproduced verbatim and are illustrative in that they were typical of those coded to a particular theme that was identified during analysis. All participants have been provided with a pseudonym in the interest of anonymity. The voice of the participant remains in standard font, while the voice of the interviewer has been italicised to create distinction between the two voices.

4.3 Animal welfare on the farm

4.3.1 *Animals should be able to do what is 'natural'*

Each focus group and interview began by asking participants to describe the images that came to mind when they thought about sheep and beef cattle farming. A strong theme that emerged from data was that animals should be able to do what participants perceived as 'natural'. The most prominent images described in an Australian context were of sheep or cattle grazing in a paddock as representative of what participants considered to be natural production methods.

Cows in the paddock. That's all I see. Sheep in the paddock. (Sally, female, 45-54, Adelaide).



Well basically sheep and cattle in grazing in green farms with lots of room and space to walk around and enjoy themselves basically. That is what I expect anyway. (Tim, male, 55-64, Melbourne).

These quotes highlight that participants of the current research believe that 'natural', extensive⁵ production systems are what they consider to be 'normal' or what they expect sheep and beef cattle production to be. While previous research (particularly from Europe) has suggested that people consider 'natural' and 'traditional' production as separate ideas (e.g. Boogaard, Oosting et al. 2011; Boogaard, Bock et al. 2011), the current research highlights that ideas about natural and traditional livestock production are blurred in the Australian context, becoming collectively representative of what participants believed to be 'normal' livestock production, or how they envisioned livestock production to be. This idea of what participants considered to be normal livestock production is generated from Australia's historical, and arguably mythical, pastoral narrative or rural idyll (chapter 1) as reiterated throughout popular media discourse (chapter 3) and is further discussed later in this chapter.

Similarly, when participants were asked to identify things that may have an impact on animal welfare, many suggested that animals should be able to express their 'natural behaviours' such as the ability to graze and move freely around.

Yeah I like the animals to be treated well while they're alive so you know, being able to roam free and eat natural products. (Lucy, female, 18-24, Toowoomba).

⁵ Throughout this dissertation 'extensive' production systems refer those where animals are raised in outdoor environments and housed within paddocks such as free-range and grass-fed production systems, while 'intensive' production systems refer to those systems introduced when agriculture was moving towards 'productivist goals' (chapter 2.3) where animals are raised indoors, housed within barns or sheds as common in conventional pork and poultry production.

Roaming and grazing in paddocks have previously been associated with expression of natural behaviours, often highlighted as one of the most important factors which impacts animal welfare in both qualitative (Te Velde, Aarts, and Van Woerkum 2002; Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014) and quantitative studies (Vanhonacker et al. 2009; Vanhonacker et al. 2012; Coleman et al. 2016).

The expression of natural behaviours was associated with animals raised in extensive production systems. Participants often suggested that intensive systems result in animal confinement which limits the abilities of animals to express natural behaviours.

I think, you know, an animal should you know, I've killed my own pigs and killed my own sheep, an animal should be able to enjoy the things it naturally does. For a pig is to wallow and do its thing and that and for a chicken to be able to scratch and fluff its feathers, you know like [for] cattle to be crammed into you know those veal crates and of course the piggeries even, it isn't good. (Tilly, female, 45-54, Adelaide).

Opposition to animal confinement has been previously demonstrated amongst other non-producer groups in research in Canada (Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014) and Europe (Miele and Evans 2005; Lassen, Sandøe, and Forkman 2006; Sørensen and Fraser 2010; Boogaard, Boekhorst, et al. 2011; Miele et al. 2011). An Australian study exploring public attitudes towards intensive lamb finishing systems also demonstrated a level of concern about animal confinement (Coleman et al. 2016). Interestingly, there was very limited discussion about feedlots within the current research, particularly in comparison to discussions about other intensive housing methods such as cages in egg production. Any mention of feedlots by participants were often due to experience with feedlots overseas, rather than domestically. The lack of discussion about the use of feedlots in sheep and beef cattle production was particularly interesting due to their prevalence in Australia. 80 percent of beef sold in Australian supermarkets has been sourced from the feedlot sector (Australian Lot Feeders Association 2019)

Diet and living environment were intrinsically linked for many participants. They highlighted their preference for grass-fed or free-range products as the animals were thought to consume a 'natural' diet associated with the animal expressing its natural grazing behaviour.

Marian: Worst case scenario with that too is in a lot of feedlots, it's also about natural behaviours as well as natural feed, which is to move around. Whereas a lot of feedlots⁶, those cows are locked in by their necks to a feeding pan in front of them and whatever is put in that feed pan is all they get to eat and they don't get to range, they don't get to walk around, they don't get to express their natural animal behaviours.

⁶ Marian had mentioned earlier in the focus group that she had experienced feedlots in Europe. Feedlots in Australia do not use head bails to restrain the animal. It is believed she was reflecting on the crates used traditionally in veal production.

Henry: I guess they are grazing animals. We know them as grazing animals. And grazing means walking around, eating little bits of stuff here and there so.

So the natural behaviour and the natural diet are intrinsically linked for you guys. And that's about the animals having in an area where the animals can do both those things.

Henry: If it can do its natural behaviour, yeah. Doing what is natural for an animal. (Marian, female, 55-64 and Henry, male, 35-44, Melbourne).

Similarly, participants associated, intensive production systems with the feeding of grain to livestock, which they considered 'unnatural'. While there was very limited discussion about feedlots specifically (other than Marian above who mentioned them in an international context), participants did talk about their preference to avoid grain-fed products.

I don't like grain-fed. So I feel like, at least if they are grass-fed they are out in the pasture, they're not just in a little shed somewhere, locked in a cage being fed rubbish they wouldn't normally eat. So I avoid grain-fed. (Sarah, female, 35-44, Adelaide).

In addition, participants described that animals kept in confinement are unable to choose what they eat, suggesting they were 'force fed' a grain diet which they would not necessarily choose for themselves.

I think ... with maybe cattle forcing them certain feeds that, I've seen in television shows that when they're in particular, I suppose, barns where they are constrained and they have to eat certain food but they don't have the opportunity to walk around because they are being maybe, you know sort of, I suppose tailored for a particular market rather than living in their natural environment, eating natural food themselves. (Anna, female, over 65, Melbourne).



Don't know much about the choice an animal has at all. But yeah I would say, you know, if given a choice of foods, most animals would choose something over other things. So you know a cow is not going to go "oh look here is a pile of corn" when there is a whole bunch of grass and clover over there. They're probably more likely to eat clover than a pile of corn. Umm and I think what you were saying about feedlots is that there isn't anything else to eat, here is a pile of corn. I'm hungry, I'm a cow, I'll eat it. Or whatever it might be, you know, wheat or something like that. (Henry, male, 35-44, Melbourne).

Diet and living conditions were intrinsically linked: grain feeding of livestock was greatly associated with intensive methods of production, while animals were thought to consume a more natural diet if they were raised outdoors, particularly due to the ability to graze. Preference for animals to consume a natural diet aligns with previous research where Canadian consumers suggested having access to

'natural food' and participating in natural behaviours such as grazing are vital to good animal welfare (Spooner, Schuppli and Fraser 2014). Verbeke et al. (2010) also highlight that European consumers consider that healthy beef is associated with the production system, with preference given to the romantic concept of the 'traditional farm' where cattle are naturally grass-fed and raised outdoors. Coleman et al. (2016) also found that Australian participants were concerned about grain-feeding of lambs relative to pasture-feeding. Similarly, Bray and Ankeny (2017) highlight that their Australian participants stated that animal confinement restricts natural behaviour, particularly preventing hens from consuming a natural diet while hens raising in cages were thought to be fed substances which the hens would not choose themselves. These previous findings align with the current research where participants expressed that intensive production systems ultimately put the animal's quality of life at risk as it removes the ability for the animal to express natural behaviours and removes the animal's opportunity to decide what to consume.

4.3.2 Traditional farms are better for animal welfare

Participants associated intensive production systems with farms owned by corporations while 'natural' production systems were associated with traditional family farms. Participants also considered family farms to be smaller in scale in comparison to corporate farms, which allowed for a greater level of care towards animals.

Susie: I just find that there is a lot of, umm, I don't know if it's to do with cattle sometimes, but a lot of our farms are quite large scale. I don't know if that is just agriculture though so. Whilst, I think for me it's a bit of diversity, I know there is a lot of family farms that really do care about their animals, but then you hear stories of, like recently of umm, this is about shearing where they just, like they're cutting open sheep and they just like stitching them up without any kind of medication or anything and obviously the farmers must be aware of that and, so, I wonder if the commercial divide makes a difference.

Penny: Like the bigger it gets?

Susie: Yeah. If the farmer really owns the farm and looks after the farm, or if the farmer's just a manager, maybe. (Susie, female, 45-54 and Penny, female, 45-54, Adelaide).

In a European study, Miele and Evans (2005) previously highlighted that small scale production is particularly relevant when ensuring good farm animal welfare. Similar preference for smaller family farms has also been documented in studies from Canada (Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014) and Europe (Krystallis et al. 2009; Lassen, Sandøe and Forkman 2006; Miele and Evans 2005) as such farms are considered to provide a greater level of care as opposed to larger, corporate farms. Much like the current research, both Verbeke et al. (2010) and Muringai et al. (2017) highlight an association between traditional farming methods used by family farms with an image which many consumers have

of 'natural', or in the case of the current research of 'normal', production particularly as animals are believed to be grass-fed and reared outdoors.

The movement of people from rural to urban areas, or rather the removal of animal production and food processing from cities, has contributed to a "romanticized nostalgic image of animal production" (Vanhonacker and Verbeke 2014, p. 160). Stewart (1996) argues that the romanticised image of animal production, or the "rural idyll", emerged with the growth of the modern urban-industrialised culture. Bunce (1994) suggests that the rural idyll exists in our minds as established by popular culture for those outside of pastoral life to dream of. In the current research, the rural idyll is based on the pastoral or 'farmscapes' which describe the agricultural landscape as artisanal, rather than as a reflection of agribusiness (Bell 2006). While the majority of Australians have dwelled in urban settings for over two centuries, Australia continues to be imagined through the 'frontier narrative' (Furniss 1999). A common subject of the white rural idyll is the family farm as celebrated within the colonial story as "hard-working settlers making an honest living off the land" (Aguiar and Marten 2011, quoted in Cairns et al. 2015 p. 1189). Aitkin (1985) dubbed the Australian variant of the rural idyll as "countrymindedness" (p. 50). However, agriculture currently only employs 307,000 Australians (National Farmers Federation 2016), equating to approximately 1.3 percent of Australia's population, and contributes about 3 percent to the country's economic output (ibid), significantly diminished from a time where agriculture was the largest sector of the economy less than a century ago (Davidson and Brodie 2005).

For participants in this research, family-owned farms were tied to ideas about traditional methods of production. Traditional farming methods were preferential as they allow the animal to express their natural behaviours and is more representative of what participants believe farming "should be". Tradition, or 'the way things were', is often considered a preference over the state of the modern world (Bauman and May 2014). The rural idyll is also a constant reminder of the past, "usually a golden past now lost in the rush of modernity" (Bell 2006 pp. 151). In the case of the current research, participants suggest that traditional farming is better, particularly as it is tied to ideas of natural production. Nostalgic reflection about traditional farming methods, even if it is based on a socially constructed narrative, allows people to establish potential solutions to the modern problems they are facing. Participants clearly asserted that modern animal agriculture poses a risk to the quality of life of farm animals and suggested that more traditional methods are better for farm animal welfare.

Although many people are removed from the production of food, the family farm still has substantial power, having found new significance amongst the contemporary food system. Advertising has aided mythologisation of the livestock sector, often using romantic and idyllic pictures to play on consumers' emotions (Te Velde, Aarts and Van Woerkum 2002). It is now common to use the romanticised ideals of the family farm in marketing campaigns, playing on the concerns which exist toward intensive

production. Guthman (2004) highlights the use of agrarian imagery in California's organic food movement to romanticise the ideals of tradition and family values. Johnston, Biro and MacKendrick (2009) demonstrate how North American corporate organic packaging is used to "symbolically connect consumption of the brand with an idealized agrarian mode of life" (p. 519). Phillipov (2016) also highlights the use of the idyllic family farm in Coles supermarket's "Helping Australia Grow" campaign to help "connect Coles' methods of sourcing fresh produced to the qualities of embeddedness, trust and place associated with alternative food practices" (p. 590). Chen (2016b) further emphasises the way in which farms and farming is idealised on food packaging, with pastoral scenes taking centre stage with farms signified by barns or old-fashioned windmills which he describes as far from realistic representations of Australian production.

Central to the family farm imaginary are individual farmers who are often used in marketing to represent the idyllic way of farming. As Bell (2006) describes, the rural idyll is a symbolic landscape which becomes a central to national identity. Within Australia, the farmer has become the centre to narratives about Australian agriculture, with the 'Aussie battler' farmer becoming a symbol of national identity. Farmers are also often being ranked in the top 10 most trusted professions (Broad 2014) and being considered contribute the most to society while receiving the least amount of recognition (Gilmore 2017). Common depictions of the Australian farmer portrayed in marketing campaigns and through collective narratives of farming often include flannelette shirts, rolled sleeves and Akubra hats, with the vast majority being Anglo-Celtic white males (Chen 2016b, Phillipov 2016). Chen (2016b) describes the use of images of farmers on product labels where farmers are depicted as individuals or part of farming families which he suggests is an attempt to help the consumer avoid the "reality that farms in Australia today comprise large agribusiness enterprises as well as family owned and operated properties" (p. 115). He also argues that such depictions of farmers "reinforce the moral status quo...thanks to popular ignorance about the realities of animal use and farm life" (ibid. p. 122). Similar to Canada (Cairns et al. 2015), the family farm within Australian rural imagery, with strong cultural associations and whiteness, is often reiterated through marketing campaigns and shared narratives of country life.

Within the rural idyll, the pastoral narrative greatly reflects the idea of artisanal farming, rather than of agribusiness (Bell 2006). As Berry (2009) describes, the family farm is smaller than its intensive, corporate counterparts, and associated with the idea of traditional, artisanal production. McKitterick et al. (2016) describe artisanal products as "distinguishable from those produced by mainstream producers through their scale, the association of the materials and methods with their locality of origin and their core attributes of taste and appearance" (p. 41). While arguably many farmers in Australia do not consider themselves as artisanal, it was evident that participants consider producers who use more traditional forms of production to have distinguishable and superior products. People who dislike

intensive meat production may also be attracted to artisanal food products based on the assumption of a close connection between farmers and the animals which they raise (Staples and Klein 2017). Heath and Meneley (2010) also demonstrate that presenting the relationship between farmer and animal as one of intimacy and care is crucial to the construction of their products as ethical, which challenges the way in which meat is produced in industrial livestock farming.

4.3.3 Australian farms are okay

Alongside the ideas that traditional farms are better than intensive farms was the belief that farms which are owned and managed by Australians have better standards of animal welfare. There was a strong view that it is Australian farmers in particular who are the ones who care for the welfare of animals, while others do not.

...a lot of farmers, especially Australian ones kind of look out for the welfare of animals (Lucy, female, 18-24, Toowoomba).



Is there any practices used in sheep and beef cattle production that you think aren't necessarily good for the animal's welfare that you can think of?

Not really, no. I think Australia are pretty good, umm. Better not talk about the overseas ones though (Mark, male, 45-54, Adelaide).



So when you're buying Australian, is that, are you thinking in that context that it's local or also because we have good standards when it comes to animal management?

It's numerous things. It's helping our own farmers, ah it's helping the country. Plus I don't trust [pause] Asian food. I'm really anti that.

From a food hygiene perspective?

Oh everything. Everything. I just don't think their standards are up to anywhere near our standards, both in killing, producing ...I'd be racist if I went anywhere further (Iain, male, over 65, Melbourne).

These quotes provide an example of 'Othering'. The process of Othering occurs when there is a difference in belief or behaviour between two social or cultural groups (Griffith Williams and Korn 2017) particularly when there is a potential risk introduced by the Other group. Milne (2013) suggests that a perceived risk provides opportunities for identity formation and a way of establishing unity in the face of difficulty or disaster, by distributing or shifting the blame to separate 'us' from the Other. Jackson (2010) also suggests that consumer anxieties about food involve a process of Othering, where

people's own anxieties are shifted onto variously defined Others, sometimes made distinct by race or nation, gender or generation. Due to the power of food, it is an ideal vehicle through which to create distinctions between different social and cultural groups.

Australia has embraced ethnic cuisines and imported foodstuffs (Santich 1996). Each phase of migration has added to the ever-growing taste for ethnic cuisine. Spaghetti bolognese, curries and stir-fries are now regular meals which grace the average Australian dinner table. Food, or more specifically 'ethnic' food, has become fundamental to the Australian lifestyle and construction of identity (Anderson and Benbow 2015). However while there has been significant appropriation of ethnic food, the dislike and distrust of foreign food, described by Santich (1996) as 'culinary xenophobia', perseveres, creating tension between 'us' and 'them'. Participants in the current research described their dislike for the way in which people from other ethnicities produce food, particularly meat. As shown by the quotes above, the dislike for food produced by the 'Other' were related to concerns about food safety and the ethical treatment of animals. More examples of how participants created distinction between themselves and the Other, namely Muslims, and vegans and vegetarians are discussed in chapter 4.4 and 5.

4.3.4 Every animal should be treated as an individual

The number of animals under the direct care of the farmer was also thought to impact animal welfare. Traditional farmers were considered to care about animal welfare as they did not overstock their properties.

I suppose I have had my grandfather's example of an old school farmer and I remember him talking with disgust about another farmer who overstocked and he would go and my grandfather said 'oh he grows a blade of grass and puts 10 sheep on it to eat it down again.' You know? He was disgusted with that because he's an old style, and he looked after his land. (Tilly, female, 45-54, Adelaide).

As argued by Kalof (2007) and further emphasised by Gunderson (2013), the rise of industrialisation and urbanisation has resulted in the "increasing commodification" of livestock production, resulting in the "growth and spread of market-orientated production" (ibid. p. 262). Critics of modern livestock production claim that the primary purpose of contemporary livestock production is not to create food but to generate a source of wealth, resulting in farm animals being considered as commodities, rather than as individual beings. Gunderson (ibid.) describes the difference between pre-modern and post-modern animal production as animals having use-value or exchange value. In pre-modern agriculture, the principal reason for animal rearing was to produce a useful product (use-value) where animals were raised in environments more representative of their natural living conditions, rather than to create profit (exchange value) as in post-modern agriculture where animals are removed from their

natural environments to maximise growth potential in intensive systems (Stuart, Schewe and Gunderson 2012). Mandel (1968) described the difference between the justifications of these two forms of production:

“[s]omeone who essentially produces use-values, intended to satisfy his own needs or those of his community, lives by the products of his own labour...The producer of commodities [products destined for market] no longer lives directly on the products of his own labour: on the contrary, he can live only if he *gets rid* of these products” (p.58).

Participants in the current study expressed similar attitudes but in association with intensive methods used in poultry and pork production as opposed to the perceived extensive nature of sheep and beef cattle production. Essentially, the methods used in sheep and beef cattle production are considered to align with use-value motives, while methods used in pork and poultry production are thought to align more strongly with exchange-value mentality. Participants also stated that farmers, as opposed to those involved intensive agriculture, work under a use-value mode of production, allowing animals to live within their natural environments while providing a greater amount of care.

While participants acknowledged that every animal having a name was “silly”, the following dialogue highlights the importance of each animal being accounted for and considered as an individual being.

What is good farm animal welfare? And what is bad? Do you have a sense of that? How do you evaluate that yourself?

Susie: Every animals got a name (group laughter). But some of them *do* do that, like not every animal maybe, but some of their favourite ones. I’m just being silly.

Chrissie: But I think that’s a good point because, yes treating each and every animal as an individual, living creature, that deserves a certain quality of life for the time that it’s alive and quality of death as well. Even if it doesn’t have a name, but I think that’s sort of the idea that you’re [implying]. (Susie, female, 45-54 and Chrissie, female, 35-44, Adelaide).

Participants in the current research suggest that the relationship between humans and animals is an important part of ensuring good animal welfare as it allows for every animal to be accounted for individually. Staples and Klein (2017) also described the alleged intimacy between humans and animals on smaller ‘more ethical’ farms in contrast to the perceived (and possibly exaggerated, see Baker 2013) separation between animals and humans in industrial farming.

The idea of giving every animal a name clearly reflects the notion that each animal should be accounted for individually. Giving non-human animals a name is a symptom of anthropomorphism which is the attribution of human mental states (thoughts, feelings, motivations and beliefs) to non-human objects or creatures (Serpell 2005). Humans commonly anthropomorphise things we love, not those we hate. For example, the most common human-animal relationship in developed countries is that between

human and pet. Such relationships go well beyond naming: for instance humans may consider their pet to have human-like emotions or personalities (Bulliet 2005; Fessler 2017). Although dogs and cats are the most common type of pet, the status is not restricted to these species. If 'pet' refers solely to a favoured animal, then any species meets the requirement. Scientists have been known to give names to experimental animals (Young 2014). Similarly, as described by Wilkie (2010), 'petted livestock' farm animals may also be given names as they are considered as unique and "more humanised" than those which may be considered as "just animals" (p. 141). Ultimately, giving names to animals helps people relate to them. Within the current research, giving each animal a name was associated with a notion of care, namely that every animal is individual and looked after as such by the farmer. Higher levels of care were attributed to smaller family farmers involved in every aspect of raising the animal, as opposed to an employee or someone involved during one stage of production. Wilkie (ibid.) emphasises this point, describing a difference in attitudes towards animals between farmers who breed them and work with them from day one and remain on the farm for up to 10 years, and those who only work with store animals slaughtered before reaching 30 months of age. Wilkie (ibid.) also suggests that the scale and type of animal production can significantly impact the extent to which producers can realistically engage with their animals. Similar ideas were shared by participants of the current research as smaller producers were viewed as able to form relationships with their animals as opposed to interacting with a "faceless herd" (ibid., p. 135), such as those of intensive farms as described by participants.

4.3.5 Farmers are victims of the system

As discussed in chapter 3, the livestock industry and government were seen as a collective entity in the print press, particularly through the process of regulatory capture (Goodfellow 2016). The voices of farmers were also often used in opposition to industry and government, often described as victims of industry and government regulation and wrong-doings. This aligns with previous research where farmers are described as "victims of the system" (Te Velde, Aarts and Van Woerkum 2002, p. 214). Such sentiment was also noted in responses from participants in the current research. While participants clearly favoured small-scale production, with some suggesting that the level of care may be greater if the farmer owns the farm, no one blamed individual producers or employees for adoption of intensive farming systems. Instead, participants often considered other participants in the value chain as responsible for intensive livestock production.

Well the farmer looks after the animal, ships it on the truck to the sales yard. Then from the sales yard it goes to the slaughterhouse and from the slaughterhouse that's where it starts. You know the buyers, the people that come in, the supermarkets whatever, bidding and that. I think that's what happens and they're the people that make the money, not the farmer.

And what do you think is stopping farmers from doing these things differently?

In this day and age, it is trade laws. They have to cut corners to be able to achieve their budgets and I think it is a monetary issue, it is certainly not a welfare issue. They are forced to take measures umm to help maintain their budgets. (Joyce, female, over 65, Adelaide).

Similar to the findings reported by Spooner, Schuppli and Fraser (2014), participants suggested that farmers had little control over markets or other economic constraints which forced them to adopt more intensive farming systems to make ends meet. Participants in Lassen, Sandøe and Foreman's (2006) work also refused to blame farmers, often pointing to a number of other factors, namely economic, which force producers to raise pigs in intensive systems.

A common assertion amongst participants in the current study was that farmers do not receive adequate support from government or major retailers, often suggesting farmers are doing the best that they can with the resources they have.

I reckon they're [farmers] the ones hard done by

Yep. By whom?

Umm probably the corporations like I'm guessing ah yeah well big corporations [referring to the retailer where the interview was conducted], let's just leave it at that...but financially I don't think they're really given a fair go, for what they have to put in...I think the government does stuff all to support ...farmers in general. (Sandra, female, 45-54, Toowoomba).

◆◆◆

I think the government is not doing enough for the farmers, I really believe that. I think you really have to look at all the suicides that have been happening in the last 10 years. People that the drought has killed them. (Susan, female, 55-64, Melbourne).

Cockfield and Botterill (2012) highlighted that Australians consider rural industries to be important, with 66 percent of people stating farmers should receive more or much more government assistance than what they were receiving. Fielke and Bardsley (2013) also discuss how the processing and retail aspects of the food chain are owned by large, multinational companies which have the ability to influence the market in order to maximise their returns, often at the expense of producers. Carey, Parker and Scrinis (2017) further highlight that supermarkets have significant influential power in animal welfare policy development, as seen in the free-range egg labelling standards. Farmers often do not receive blame for poor welfare conditions, and instead are considered to be victims, forced to adopt unfavourable measures to ensure they maintain their bottom line. While farmers have reportedly attempted to shift responsibility for animal welfare to consumers (often with the mindset that "if they are willing to pay more, we would be happy to deliver better animal welfare"), consumers

shift the responsibility to government and retailers (ibid.). Further discussion of participant understandings of the role of retailers in animal welfare are presented in chapter 4.3.

4.3.6 Chicken and pig production is not the same as sheep and beef cattle production

The difference in the way that participants describe sheep and beef cattle production when compared with chicken and pork production reveal the preference for free-ranging animals in natural environments over those kept in confinement.

There are some consumers out there that want sustainable farming and buy based on what they believe is sustainable

I mean we went off beef and lamb too, we love lamb, the taste. Beef is a bit dry and horrible. But I was put off by the stories of cloven hooves and stuff like that and what it was doing to the Australian soil and so on there. But umm I am pretty sure they have a better life than our chickens and our pigs. (Angus, male, 45-54, Adelaide).

Whether due to a lack of awareness or a lack of knowledge, participants did not explicitly mention the use of feedlots in this research. However, they did express concerns about feeding unnatural diets to sheep and beef cattle, particularly grained based diets which are a feature of feedlots. María (2006) suggests that when individuals lack knowledge about livestock production, they have a more negative perception of animal welfare if the production is considered more intensive (e.g., broiler chickens, laying hens and pigs). As demonstrated in this research, participants had greater concern for the welfare of chickens and pigs in intensive production systems, as opposed to sheep and beef cattle raised extensively. Pork and poultry production have received significant attention in recent print press media, activism campaigns and retailer marketing, meaning that consumer awareness of the intensive nature of these industries may be greater. However, increased awareness around the use of feedlots to finish beef and lamb, particularly as these industries grow in Australia, may result in increased concern amongst consumers, particularly given the existing concerns about feeding animals on grain-based diets.

4.3.7 Summary

Participants of the current research had romanticised ideas about sheep and beef cattle production in Australia. This chapter demonstrates that participants prefer extensive production systems as they consider them to be 'normal' or what they believe livestock production should be (discussed further in chapter 6). Given that 80 percent of beef sold domestically is sourced from the feedlot sector (Australian Lot Feeders Association 2018), the almost complete absence of feedlots within interviews

and focus groups, even when conducted in a region where they are quite common⁷, is particularly interesting. Participants contrasted sheep and beef cattle production with pork and poultry production, expressing greater amounts of concern about welfare of chickens and pigs as they are raised in intensive production systems. Such intensive production systems ultimately put animals' quality of life at risk by limiting their abilities to express natural behaviours and consume natural diets. Participants value Australian farmers, particularly as they are central to the pastoral narrative and related to consumer expectations of what livestock production should be. As such, concerns about animal welfare are often because of the actions of 'others' rather than the Australian farmer. Essentially, all these concerns about animal welfare are based on the modernisation of agriculture which has come about through social, cultural and economic changes incurred within livestock production over the past 30 to 40 years.

⁷ 60 percent of feedlots are located in Queensland (Australian Lot Feeders Association 2018), with many located in the Darling Downs which is where Toowoomba is located.

4.4 Animal welfare during transport and slaughter

4.4.1 Trucks 'cram' those animals in

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, one of the most prominent concerns for participants related to the welfare of sheep and beef cattle during transport. Confinement of animals during transportation and the long distances travelled were major topics of discussion among participants, who used words like "crammed" or "shoved" to describe their dislike of transportation methods.

Let's discuss cattle farming, what kinds of images come to mind? Does anyone, sort of, when you think of cattle farming in your head, what kind of images do you see?

I think of umm the sheep in the uhh trucks, all shoved in there, that's what I think of yeah.

On Portrush road, yeah. (Susie, female, 45-54, Adelaide).



So when I say sheep and beef farming, what do you think of? What sorts of images come to mind?

Oh, crowded cattle trucks, you know, animals being badly bloody treated actually.

Okay. Can you elaborate a bit more on that?

You know, you see some cattle trucks sometimes, they're absolutely, animals crammed in, you know? (Geoff, male, 45-54, Melbourne).

Participants also expressed concerns about the distance that some animals travel on trucks, particularly to abattoirs.

You mentioned ah slaughter, and we are talking about meat, so I am going to be talking about slaughter as well. Are there any aspects of that that concern you more than others?

Ah yeah, quite a lot, particularly in Victoria because we have very structured system which makes it very difficult for farmers to, for instance, go to a smaller abattoir. A lot of time they are forced to take the animals long distances which often means putting them into, jamming them into trucks and putting the animals under an enormous amount of stress umm which I think is bad for the animals, it is bad for the meat or the meat quality. (Marian, female, 55-64, Melbourne).

Much like the current research, Miele and Evans (2005) demonstrate that people consider minimum to no transportation during an animal's life to be essential to good animal welfare. Other research from Europe echoes the current findings, where space allowance, shockproof and calm transportation methods and duration of transport were of most concern to participants (Vanhonacker et al. 2010).

Long distances travelled to slaughter has also proved problematic for Canadian participants (Spooner, Schuppli, and Fraser 2014). Long distance transport of livestock is common in Europe due to the low cost of transport relative to market value, market demand and relative seasonal variation, geographical concentration or production and contract agreements (Carlsson, Frykblom and Lagerkvist 2007). These reasons for transportation are similar to those in Australia, but others include the closure of smaller, local abattoirs due to the increased scale of modern processing facilities which are often located further from the saleyard or farm gate. Additionally, Coleman et al. (2014, as cited in Coleman 2018) have demonstrated that 24 percent of the general public in Australia have low trust in workers involved in land-based livestock transportation. Ways in which to overcome long distance truck transport is to open, or in the case of Australia re-open, smaller processing facilities or use mobile abattoirs (Spooner, Schuppli and Fraser 2014) which may be unrealistic based on the efficiencies of larger processing plants and the high cost of livestock processing in Australia. Ultimately, Participants asserted that subjecting animals to long travel times to slaughter impacts animal quality of life which was attributed to modernisation and industrialisation of the meat value chain.

4.4.2 Consumers are happy not knowing about slaughter

While participants have some knowledge about the slaughter process, they did not want to dwell on the details, and were happy so long as the process was performed quickly and humanely. The general consensus was that while they had little knowledge about the process, they thought that ethical and humane ways of slaughtering livestock were practised in Australia.

I think I am happy not knowing because I know what it was like on the farm and I mean I can just generally think what it would be like. I mean it is a trauma to the animal, it is a trauma to the people who look after the animal. (Susan, female, 55-64, Melbourne).



I didn't really sort of have a view until I came to Australia and you know, when stuff like ethical, like ethical and humane ways of killing, that's when I started to change my perception of slaughter. (Ben, male, 18-24, Melbourne).

Not wanting to know about the process of slaughter is an example of 'affected ignorance' (Williams 2008, Schwartz 2018). Affected ignorance is a philosophical concept which deals with moral issues (Schwartz 2018) and commonly involves the refusal to think about or consider a practice, particularly if it the practice may be immoral (Williams 2008). The current research highlights the form of affected ignorance which occurs when people refuse to consider the connection between their actions and the consequent suffering of another being. As Schwartz (2018) suggests, this kind of ignorance is "generated by what one knows but does not want to hear" (p. 1). As highlighted by the quotes from the current research, participants are aware of the slaughter process but do not want to know about

the mechanisms involved or think about the idea that an animal had died in order for them to consume meat.

While they did not wish to know about the details of animal slaughter, participants acknowledged that it was an essential process to allow consumption of meat.

Okay so when you think about sheep and beef cows, umm and their welfare, do you ever associate the slaughter process? So do you think about how the animal, or that meat got to the supermarket?

Yeah, you do, hey. You do. That's the hard part to answer. It's really, really hard cause we don't to see it. No one [does]. And then people, I don't even know how they can stand doing it. How can they work in that environment? A place like that. You know what? It's got to be done. Unfortunately, it has to. How are we going to survive, to eat? I'm pretty sure you like eating your meat.

I do like my meat

So there you go. Umm and I know you, you're the same way as me, we all feel for our animals, but the job's got to be done. (Paddy, male, 35-44, Melbourne).

A result of people becoming removed from animal production and many not wanting to dwell on the details of the slaughter process has resulted in people 'de-animalising' meat (Buller and Cesar 2007). De-animalising meat is motivated by reducing feelings of guilt (Te Velde, Aarts and Van Woerkum 2002) and/or avoiding feelings of disgust (Hamilton 2006; Hopkins and Dacey 2008; Kubberød et al. 2002). The de-animalising process is further supported by meat products not resembling the animal in any way. Meat is commonly purchased from the supermarket, pre-packaged in Styrofoam and plastic and greatly lacking any resemblance to the live animal it once was (Bulliet 2005; Leroy and Degreef 2015). Disguising the animal characteristics of meat by removing prompts, such as the head, feet and skin, removes the associated personality and intelligence of the living animal which further enables the de-animalising process (Plous 1993). Supermarkets have further aided this process by presenting ready-cooked meat in packages, unlike the transparency involved in selling animal flesh (Hoogland, de Boer, and Boersema 2005). Separation between the animal and meat is further complicated by linguistics through creation of semantic differences particularly in English by substituting animal designators, such as cow and sheep, with terms such as beef and lamb in the context of consumption (Plous 1993). Such differentiation reinforces the de-animalising process, aiding mental detachment between the living animal and meat product.

Along with the tendency for those in developed countries to de-animalise meat, meat consumers in these locales are constantly confronted by the 'meat paradox' which describes the conflict that meat

consumers face between the thought of their consumption behaviour harming animals, while enjoying meat as part of their diet (Herzog 2010; Joy 2010; Piazza et al. 2015). Participants of the current research were willing to consume meat despite not wanting to consider the slaughter process, recognising that the trauma that the animal faces.

Do you think about the slaughter process? When you think about sheep and cows? Like how the animal was killed before it became meat?

Well actually I, I spend some time thinking about them yeah actually yeah it's quite cruel because the animal is a living thing ah they have life and sense and feeling but we are just slowly killing them it's just like eww. (Tristan, male, 18-24, Melbourne).



I just think of the animals and I feel sorry for them because ultimately they are going to be killed and that's, what, emotionally I think ohh that isn't good but then again I do eat the red meat. (Anna, female, over 65, Melbourne).

As Leroy and Praet (2017) describe, even with an increasing level of moral aversion towards animal killing, those in modern societies are still fond of consuming meat, while experiencing increasing levels of ambivalence. Loughnan, Bastain and Haslam (2014) consider that the resolution of this conflict can take one of two directions, the first being that one can reject meat consumption entirely, bringing behaviour in line with moral ideals, while the second is that one can bring their beliefs and attitudes into alignment with their behaviours through various psychological manoeuvres. This psychological process is referred to as cognitive dissonance theory, originally theorised by Festinger (1957) to explain the process of reducing psychological discomfort and negative feelings through rationalisation and justification for the behaviour in question. Joy (2010) describes three principal justification categories used by meat consumers to preserve their commitment to eating meat and diffuse guilt which they may experience while eating animal products. These justifications include that eating meat is *natural*, *normal* and *necessary*, commonly referred to as the "3 N's of justification" (Joy 2010, pp. 96-7). Through socialisation, people consider that meat eating is natural (part of human nature and biology), normal (how we ought to behave based on our customs and traditions) and necessary (one cannot live without meat with nutrients found only in meat as essential for a healthy, balanced diet) (Joy 2010). Piazza et al. (2015) added a fourth N to these justifications, *nice*, based on the enjoyment which people experience when consuming meat. Some participants in the current research associated the consumption of meat with a healthy diet, but also recognised that slaughter was a necessary condition for their ability to eat meat, a process about which they did not wish to think, likely as a symptom of the meat paradox.

4.4.3 Slaughter should be quick and humane

Participants unanimously stated that slaughter of livestock should be performed as quickly and humanely as possible. Such findings echo previous research from Europe (Miele and Evans 2005) and Canada (Spooner, Schuppli and Fraser 2014). It was common for participants in the current research to suggest that animals not only had a right to a good life, but also a good death.

Yeah. It [slaughter] should be done quickly. Get it over and done with for the poor animals, you know and umm so they're not suffering. And that way then, you know, they can do what they have to do. Hang the animal, take the meat off. (Paddy, male, 35-44, Melbourne).



There are issues around having a good life and serving a good death. Or as good as possible. (Marian, female, 55-65, Melbourne).



I think they should just be allowed to be animals right up until the day we have to kill them, you know what I mean? So they have a nice life. Like you, you need to honour that someone's, that you, you are taking somethings life, we should give it a nice life right up until the time you have to take it. (Sarah, female, 35-44, Adelaide).

Participants considered the practice of stunning prior to slaughter to be an essential part of animals having a good death. Stunning the animal was thought to be less cruel than not doing so because the animals were unconscious and unaware of their coming fate. Previous research has also indicated that European citizens consider the slaughter of animals without pain or stress to be important, with stunning of animals as somewhat important in the process (Vanhonacker et al. 2010). Similarly, Canadian citizens have expressed concerns about ineffective stunning prior to slaughter causing animal stress (Spooner, Schuppli and Fraser 2014). Participants in the current research clearly value that the process of stunning allows animals to have a good death.

Concerns about the use of pre-slaughter stunning was greatly associated with worries about halal slaughter methods. Concern expressed by participants was similar to that of Canadian citizens: "because the animal's not stunned before they're slaughtered" (Spooner, Schuppli and Fraser 2014, p. 155). As described by Leroy and Praet (2017), developments in meat production and processing in developed countries has resulted in ritualistic or religious killing and associated ceremonial approaches to slaughter becoming fundamentally irrelevant (Hoogland, de Boer and Boersema 2005; Pollan 2006). Traditional, more conservative methods used for halal slaughter do not use pre-slaughter stunning. Some adherents to the Islamic faith believe that the meat from animals stunned prior to slaughter is haram (forbidden) as the process of stunning may kill the animal prior to the artery being cut, and

there is no justifiable means to determine otherwise; thus for more conservative Muslims, for meat to be considered halal, the animal must be alive at the point of slaughter. However, all animals in fact must be stunned prior to slaughter in Australia, unless granted permission under exceptional circumstances (Armanios and Ergene 2018). Islamic religious leaders in Australia have accepted pre-slaughter stunning practices as halal, and thus meat labelled as such as been subject to the same slaughter practices as conventional meat products including pre-slaughter stunning. Regardless, participants of the current research expressed that stunning prior to slaughter is fundamental to providing the animal with a good death whereas removing the process of stunning puts this quality of death at risk.

How any person can stand there and like, kill a live animal is beyond me. And as mum says halal meat is even worse. When they what, slit their throat and let them bleed to death.

So it, it's different between the two processes. However, you think both are cruel?

Oh very. Yeah. One is kinder than the other though. At least one has been hit with a stun gun, before you know, they're killed, as such.

They're not aware of it.

Yeah which is kinder, I guess but I don't agree with meat but halal is just disgusting. And how anyone can sit there and eat a piece of halal meat, knowing that this animal went through an enormous amount of pain is beyond me. I wouldn't eat it. (Olivia, female, 25-34, Toowoomba).

Much of the discussion relating to halal slaughter in Australia has been associated with the live export trade, with many destination countries for Australian livestock having a Muslim majority. Animal activist organisations, particularly Animals Australia, use emotive and heavily edited imagery of what they describe as the slaughter of Australian animals within the live export trade. The imagery is often gruesome and sensationalistic and is considered by industry as a poor representation of what actually occurs, with breaches to standards often described as 'exceptions to the rule'. A primary example of such imagery was seen on the Four Corners program, "A Bloody Business" (Doyle 2011). The program showed graphic images of animal slaughter using what was described as the halal slaughter method where one or few slaughtermen were in a dark space with the animal tied down, using blunt knives to cut the animals throat. It is no surprise that the use of such imagery and associating it with halal slaughter methods used overseas has resulted in concern about the way in which Australian animals are treated overseas. Fozdar and Spittles (2014) argue that representation of mistreatment of Australian cattle in the program played on Orientalist traditions of seeing so-called Western behaviours as civilised while Eastern practices are considered to be barbaric.

Concerns about halal meat products in Australia is rather ironic as the process of halal slaughter within Australia is the same as the standard Australian method of slaughter⁸. Thus the majority of sheep and beef cattle in Australia are slaughtered in accordance to halal specifications, unless deemed haram for other reasons (such as contact with alcohol used for cleaning machinery). As Bonne and Verbeke (2007) note: “halal is a credence quality attribute, i.e., a product characteristic that cannot be evaluated or ascertained by the individual consumer, even upon or after consuming the good” (p. 36). It is evident that concern about halal in Australia is based on lack of awareness about slaughter in general (which is unsurprising based on participant preferences to not consider the slaughter process). However, concerns about halal slaughter also clearly are associated with broader concerns about halal certified foods which have previously sparked an Australian Senate Inquiry into third-party certification where most of the submissions were about halal certification, with the suggestion that such products are associated with funding of extremist terrorism organisations. Although food can bring people together, food also provides a vehicle to set people apart, performing exclusionary roles which isolate or reinforce ‘otherness’ (Wright and Annes 2013). Such processes and their association with concerns about halal slaughter, and more broadly, about Islam and Muslim people, are further discussed in chapter 6.

4.4.4 *“We should slaughter our animals here” – concerns about live export*

As live export has been a long-standing and ongoing point of contention in Australia, it is unsurprising that it was raised as an issue associated with animal welfare by participants. Many participants stated that the trade is disgusting and unnecessary. Similar to concerns expressed about truck transport, participants were worried about animals being tightly packed on live export vessels and transported long distances.

So we were just talking about the live export you saw on Four Corners, um so are you worried about the animals on the trip or about what happens to them when they get to the other end?

Both because you know they’re packed so tightly and haven’t got water and access to. I don’t know. I just know it’s a long journey and its cruelty and they suffer. (Beverly, female, over 65, Melbourne).

Comments were not made solely on the live export transportation process. Many participants were concerned about destination countries, often expressing worries about how the animals are treated in countries who receive livestock through the live export supply chain. Concerns about animal

⁸ Unlike halal slaughter, kosher slaughter forms an exception in relation to pre-slaughter stunning within Australia. While kosher slaughter is still monitored and regulated, statistics about kosher slaughter in Australia are unreliable based on inconsistencies in supply of kosher meat products (L. Hewitt, personal communication, August 7 2018).

treatment in receiving countries were greatly associated with slaughter practices, particularly halal slaughter.

Are there any issues you are unsure about associated with beef and sheep production?

I am only unsure of when the sheep or livestock is shipped overseas. To say for instance to Indonesia or any Asian country or anywhere, how they are treated there. I have got a bit of a thing about that because there has been programs on TV ... saying the inhumane attitude they have towards these animals. So it is a concern, I must admit. (Susan, female, 55-64, Melbourne).

Similar to the process of othering described in chapter 4.3.3, concerns about halal slaughter are also an example of othering and culinary xenophobia. As in other developed countries, there is significant negative stigma in Australia associated with the Islamic faith, with 41 percent of respondents in Scanlon Foundation's 'Life in Australia' survey having a negative attitude towards Muslims (Markus 2017). Discrimination against those of colour and different races extends far back in Australian history, particularly in association with the so-called White Australia Policy. However, even after the enormous growth in migration and settlement of Muslims in Australia over the past 30 years, and the subsequent emergence of second and third-generation communities, Islam is still viewed by many as culturally incompatible with so-called Western ideals (Humphrey 2007). The arrival of unauthorised refugees in the 1990s (Kabir 2005) and the more recent 'Operation Sovereign Borders' employed by the Australian Government (Australian Government 2018b), along with the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States (Humphrey 2007) and the ongoing fear of Islamic extremist terror attacks (Fahd 2017), have contributed to the belittlement and alienation of Muslims in Australia. Silva (2017) documented the work of the media in creating a sense of 'the Other' among non-Islamic people and adherents of the Islamic faith, particularly since the events of 9/11, and the association between Islam and acts of terror (Nurullah 2010). Halal certification of products sparked a Senate Inquiry in Australia, where a significant number of responses expressed concerns about payments for such certification funding terrorist organisations (Australian Government 2015a).

In comparison to previous analyses of culinary xenophobia which focus on discomfort associated with ingestion of foreign cuisine or dishes, the concerns about halal slaughter present unique findings in that participants were challenged by a method of processing rather than a particular food. Participants in the current research suggested that slaughter should be done as quickly and humanely as possible to provide a good quality death and stated that halal slaughter did not fulfil these qualities (chapter 4.3). However, participants also raised concerns about the process of halal slaughter, often describing halal practices as 'disgusting' and bad for animal welfare as they put the quality of an animal's death at risk. Such dislike for halal slaughter was also used as justification for banning the live export trade,

particularly as participants considered Australia has better slaughter practices than importing countries which are predominantly Muslim, adding further distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Participants in the current research are ultimately concerned about halal slaughter as it not only seen as a threat to an animal's quality of death but is related to perceived risks which halal certification poses to Australian society and gives further justification for non-Muslim Australians to create distinction between 'us' and the Muslim population through a form of culinary xenophobia.

As an alternative to live export trade, participants often suggested that animals should be slaughtered in Australia and exported as meat. It was considered that this option would be more economically viable and would create jobs for Australians while removing the associated cruelty within the live export industry.

I feel that the live animal export is a major issue as far as I am concerned personally and everyone in my circles. I think we can do far more for this country by bringing onshore the abattoirs and processing situations and if the Muslim countries insist on having our live animals then I am afraid it should be a closed door and we seek other markets that do accept our processed meat. (Joyce, female, over 65, Adelaide).

The Australian Live Export Council (ALEC) provide an extensive list of reasons on their website (www.auslivestockexport.com) for why live export occurs, including justifications such as supporting a large range of consumers and market segments to which live animal exports are suited (including those with stricter halal slaughter standards than Australia itself) and local businesses in destination countries being able to utilise the entire animal, not just the meat. While previous exposés have focused on animal treatment within importing countries, the current affairs program "60 Minutes" aired footage of the mistreatment of sheep on Australian live export vessels in April 2018 (Calcutt and Little 2018) (after the focus groups and interviews were conducted for this research) where 2,400 sheep died due to heat stress en route from Western Australia to the Middle East (Doran 2018). This footage sparked further outrage both within and outside of the industry, with protests held in Adelaide (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2018a) and Perth (Laurie 2018), and activist organisations, such as Animals Australia, increasing campaigning against the trade (Animals Australia 2018a). Based on subsequent outrage and responses collected in this research, it is evident that the reasons for live export supplied by ALEC are do not justify the poor welfare conditions that are frequently reported in the media.

4.4.5 Summary

The views about the slaughter and transport of sheep and beef cattle discussed in this chapter demonstrate that the romanticised image of agriculture, and what consumers expect livestock production to be, also relates to other aspects of the meat value chain that are beyond the farm gate.

While participants did not want to actively think about the process of slaughter (a potential symptom of 'affected ignorance'), they believed that slaughter carried out in Australia was ethical and humane. However it was clear that they were concerned about the scale of processing and the distance required for animals to travel to slaughter, particularly emphasised by the concern about truck transportation. Long distance transport is a symptom of the modernisation and globalisation of the meat value chain, with processing facilities becoming larger, centralised and more mechanised, removing the necessity for smaller abattoirs. Live export is also a symptom of the globalisation of our food system, with animals being bred in Australia but finished and slaughtered overseas to suit the local market. As will be demonstrated in the following section, the romanticised image of agriculture and what people consider to be 'normal' when it comes to livestock production is also related to concerns about the meat product.

4.5 The meat

4.5.1 *Animal welfare product labels*

In Australia, there is no legislated requirement to label animal products based on the type of production system used. However, there are numerous non-regulated labels that make direct (or sometimes indirect) claims about the product being produced under a higher standard of animal welfare. As demonstrated in chapter 3, the ‘free-range label’, particularly in eggs, is the most recently contested in Australia (Parker, Brunswick and Kotev 2013; Bray and Ankeny 2016). The growth of products which have animal welfare claims in Australia suggests that producers and retailers believe there is increasing interest in these products and that some consumers are hoping to influence production practices through their purchasing decisions (Dixon 2003; Kehlbacher, Bennett and Balcombe 2012). However, while consumers rely on labels to identify products with animal welfare claims, many are frustrated and confused by the proliferation of product labels, often struggling to determine what the claims mean (Bray and Ankeny 2017). For instance, 30 percent of participants in Rimal’s (2005) study considered there to be insufficient information provided on meat labels, while 80 percent considered it very important to have labelling to identify meat production methods. Participants in the current research echoed such sentiments, suggesting that there is insufficient information provided for the consumer to determine what the label actually means.

I don’t think there is enough on the labelling to make, to help. I just make a guess and I trust the butchers that I buy from, what they say about their products. And the labelling in the supermarket, I don’t think it gives enough definition of what’s happened. Grass-fed that might be fine, but I don’t know what that actually means. (Lara, female, 35-44, Melbourne).

Consumers are required to assess products labels when purchasing everyday items, particularly those which have ethical or scientific claims. Labels have been considered as a means to help consumers navigate the confusing landscape which is the supermarket shelf. Product labelling is considered as a form of “doing science in public” (Gregory and Millar 1998, p. 84) as it links together (sometimes controversial) scientific advice, public sense-making and consumer decisions (Eden 2011). However, the one-way provision of information through labels as a solution to understanding animal welfare claims is a form of the (flawed (Eden 2011)) ‘deficit model’. The deficit model of knowledge suggests that negative attitudes towards particular applications of science and technologies is based on ignorance resulting from a deficit in knowledge (Sturgis and Allum 2004, further described in chapter 5.4.4). Rather than relying on the deficit model, Eden (2011) uses the concept of ‘boundary objects’ (Star and Griesemer 1989) to conceptualise food labelling. Boundary objects which are “devices for communication between the worlds of food producers and consumers” (Eden 2011, p. 179). Boundary objects exist “in multiple worlds and...[have] different identities in each” (Star and Griesemer 1989, p.

409) with “enough immutable content to maintain integrity, remain recognisable, and serve as interpreters between communities” (Bray and Ankeny 2016, p. 188). The flexibility of understanding and interpreting boundary objects such as labels is because information is not simply transferred from one entity to another (as inferred by the deficit model), but rather actively constructed and interpreted (Eden 2011). Thus, labels on products denoting animal welfare claims are interpreted to mean different things amongst different consumer groups and are probably interpreted differently to producers. However as demonstrated by the current research, there is a great deal of confusion amongst consumers about the claims which some of these labels are making which is further exacerbated by the sheer number of different claims being made (i.e. free-range vs. grass-fed vs. pasture-fed). While producers and retailers may understand what these labels mean, and often suggest that these labels are a means to allow consumers to make informed choices, the current research highlights that such labelling is creating confusion while attributing to the anxiety experienced about the way in which meat products are produced in Australia.

Some participants in the current research also stated that products with animal welfare claims and their associated labelling were marketing gimmicks used by large retailers to make money. de Jonge and van Trijp (2013) suggest that retailers have both economic and moral interests in relation to farm animal welfare. Such economic interests include satisfying consumer wants and needs, distinguishing themselves from competitors and anticipating new legislation in animal welfare or even influencing changes in legislation. Retailer moral interests include maintaining a social responsibility to sell animal welfare friendly products, and to stimulate sustainable consumption (ibid.). Although supermarkets have an interest in sustainable and ethical consumption, participants in the current research were sceptical about some animal welfare claims, often associating such claims with retailer desires to generate profit rather than improve animal welfare.

*Okay. And so what motivates your purchasing decisions in regards to sheep and beef products?
Does the welfare play a big role?*

It's starting to because in Safeway they, is it Safeway or Coles? They advertise now RSPCA approved products. We see that and then we will go for those.

So you do encounter the animal welfare friendly products?

Yes. They have a big promotion on it, all their catalogues every week. It's a really big promotion. And they're making bucks out of it. So that will help change. Of course it will because they know there is a dollar in it. (Geoff, male, 45-54, Melbourne).

4.5.2 I try to buy free-range

Although sceptical about some animal welfare claims, a number of participants were advocates for free-range and grass-fed products. It was common for participants to talk about their preferences to purchase free-range pork and poultry products, even though they only were asked specifically about sheep and beef cattle. Including this information could be due to a greater awareness of animal welfare friendly products associated with pork and poultry or related to these products remaining within the consumer's price point (Bray and Ankeny 2017). In relation to sheep and beef products, some participants suggested that they look for the free-range equivalent in grass-fed products.

So what would your ideal product be?

Umm free-range pork. Umm any grass-fed kind of beef or steak or anything like that I think is really good. (Lucy, female, 18-24, Toowoomba).

◆◆◆

I do look for grass-fed beef and yeah like I said, free-range chook. I tend to not buy pork because I don't necessarily like the way that pigs have to live, unless it's free-range pork. (Lara, female, 34-45, Melbourne).

◆◆◆

Pork, I try and go free-range all the time. Sheep and cattle ... I do look for grass-fed but if I can't get it then, it's okay I will just go your normal stuff. (Sasha, female, 24-35, Toowoomba).

The increasing amount of information available to consumers about how meat is produced through retailers and labelling initiatives, alongside increasing interest in livestock production from the media and animal welfare activists, is forcing consumers to reflect on meat choices and to establish whether they trust the systems in which animals are produced for food. Trust is established based on the assumption that events will continue as they have before (Miszta 1996). So long as this trust is not betrayed, it will become more or less habitual and automatic. It is only when problems begin to arise that we begin to reflect on this trust. Bildtgaard (2008) suggests that as long as the food tastes, feels and looks like it has previously, there is no need to re-evaluate food production. However, the provision of information about how a food product is grown or processed can result in re-evaluation of trust. As reflected in the current research, Australians believe that sheep and beef production are carried out using more natural forms of livestock production. However, 80 percent of beef sold domestically in Australia has come from a feedlot, indicating it has been grain-fed (Australian Lot Feeders Association 2018). By introducing products such as grass-fed beef results in the consumer questioning "but what was my cow fed before?" and thus reflecting on their product choices as the

label is different to what they originally expected, that is that all beef and sheep are produced in natural production systems, and results in a re-evaluation of trust.

Previous research has highlighted that consumers use animal welfare as a proxy for other product attributes which they are concerned about such as food safety, quality and healthiness (Harper and Henson 2001; Napolitano et al. 2007). Free-range and grass-fed products were preferred by participants of the current research as they were associated with higher standards of animal welfare as they use more traditional and natural methods of farming. The preference for natural foods, particularly where natural relates to the process of production rather than ingredient content, is well-recognised in scholarly literature (Rozin 2005). Preference for free-range or grass-fed products aligns with the idea that “what is better for the animal is better for me” (Bray and Ankeny 2017, p. 219), that is, if the animal has a good quality of life, then it will provide the best quality product for an individual to consume.

Food safety concerns amongst participants in the current research were mostly aligned with concerns about food additives in relation to grain feeding of livestock. Participants in the current research were not only concerned about the physical grain, but potential contamination from chemicals used during grain production.

I also don't like all the [chemical] which is on the grains. And they would consume it and it just goes into us. (Tilly, female, 45-54, Adelaide).

Participants in the current research expressed concern about the properties of grain, either chemicals used in grain production or the physical characteristics of the grain itself, particularly in relation to its perceived unnaturalness. This concern is related to what Rozin, Millman, and Nemeroff (1986) describe as the *Law of Contagion* where things which once have been in contact with each other may influence each other through the transfer of properties via an ‘essence’. This essence remains after the physical contact has ceased and may be considered a permanent contaminant. Rozin, Millman, and Nemeroff (ibid) continue to describe forward causation where the essence influences the entity with which it has come into contact. The idea of ‘you are what you eat’ is an example of forward causation, indicating that one will take on the properties of the food that he or she eats. In relation to consumption of meat, participants may think that the animal takes on the properties of grain consumed, which will later be ingested by the consumer through the meat product. Some participants also believed that meat raised within intensive systems also contain an essence which is passed on to the consumer. Ultimately, participants of the current research suggested that the unnatural qualities of livestock production have implications for meat quality and safety.

4.5.3 Butchers are better

While many participants purchased the majority of their meat from supermarkets, there were clear opinions among many that butchers are able to supply a better-quality product. This view was particularly apparent when participants described their preferences to buy from a butcher for a special occasion, rather than meat for everyday consumption.

Why do you buy it from a butcher shop?

Because you can get it cut to what you want. You know it is fresh.

So it's a quality thing?

Quality and you can actually see what you are getting. Whereas in the supermarket, who knows what you are getting from the supermarket because it's already packed, you can't tell what's what. (Paddy, male, 35-44, Melbourne).



So where do you typically purchase your meat from?

Ah, typically supermarkets. Umm and to a lesser degree the local butcher.

Would you buy from a butcher for a special occasion or something like that?

Certainly, yep. So if we're looking for something that we know is going to eat well, yeah we will go to the butcher. (Nick, male, 25-34, Toowoomba).

Participants also suggested that they prefer to buy from butchers to support small, local businesses. The idea of supporting local business was often used in opposition to supporting big businesses, such as the major retailers, as they are putting the smaller business owners at risk of losing their livelihood.

There is a feel about a butcher, about a local business. It just feels like you're being a bit more supportive of community business rather than the big business monopolising. So I think for me, that's probably a few, like we get bones for our dogs for example. My husband eats meat, red meat, so yeah the notion of getting stuff from a butcher for all the reasons like everyone else has said but also because there is a notion that the butcher is trying to keep their business alive. I would rather support that than big business. I mean no matter what, if I don't shop at Coles or [Woolworths] for example, they will be fine. (Nina, female, 35-44, Adelaide).

Butchers were considered artisanal, with participants describing an appreciation in being able to see the unpackaged product in the shop window. Butchers also were considered to have better product knowledge, particularly related to product provenance.

Maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago when it was like everything started to get pre-packaged, but I think now everyone is moving more towards naturally grown things and less chemicals and less packaging and wanting to actually get feedback from the artisan that is creating things. Like a butcher, that's an art. To be able to do something like that, it's not just coming onto your shelf pre-packaged. Someone has actually touched that meat and is forming that for you to have. (April, female, 18-24, Adelaide).

Preferences for buying from butchers were also associated with rejection or dislike of post-modern animal agriculture, particularly related to the scale of modern meat processing.

It's probably just coming back to buying from your local butchers, not trying to fund a corporation which is just all about profit. Not about actually, oh like I haven't done my personal research but I kind of would believe that you see one steak, what's coming out of an abattoir and one steak where our farmers looked after his cattle, loaded them up, at the end of the day shot one to feed, I'm pretty sure that meat would be 10 times better for ya. Just that whole, I don't know, energy force towards it. (James, male, 25-34, Melbourne).

There have been significant changes in how and where people purchase meat since the mid-twentieth century in Australia and elsewhere. Butchery as a trade and butcher shops as community institutions were important in modern urban life. For example, these institutions in Europe experienced significant impacts as the meat industry transitioned into post-modernity where production methods were transformed and supply chains were restructured to maximise output and profit (Lang 2003). Prior to this, meat consumption was largely seasonal as animals were raised on pasture (Kamp 2006). Technological advances, such as nitrogen based fertilised and farming equipment, resulted in a surplus of grain which led to feeding of grain to livestock, enabling year-round supply of meat (Ocejo 2014). The industry has also shifted geographically, moving the "dirty work" (ibid., p. 108) away from urban centres to rural areas to be closer to animal supplies (Pachirat 2011; Ogle 2013; Ocejo 2014). There were also technological advances in meat processing, with slaughtering and butchering of livestock becoming concentrated in large-scale, specialised facilities, removing the necessity of smaller abattoirs and butchers. Meat is now received by retailers in pre-packaged retail cuts ready for the supermarket shelf, reducing the necessity for skilled butchers on site. Supermarkets are now the most popular point of sale for meat, reducing the number of neighbourhood butcher shops, although they still have a presence in urban and rural Australia.

However, it seems that many people in developed countries are returning to the small corner shop. There are many critics of the 'soulless' supermarket, with many turning back to smaller, independent shops run by locals. Participants in the current research expressed preferences to purchase from butchers due to superior quality, product knowledge and desires to support small, local businesses.

However as well recognised in consumer behavioural literature, people may say one thing and behave completely differently. While those who have greater concern about their meat are less likely to buy from a supermarket (Verbeke and Vackier 2004), participants in the current research admitted to relying on large retailers for meat purchases due to price and convenience. The local butcher may only provide limited stock with higher prices which is not suited to modern, everyday consumption patterns (Seth and Randall 2011). They may also not be conveniently located within the consumer's local shopping centre. Despite this, participants in the current research suggested they are able to alleviate some their concerns about modern meat production by turning to smaller butchers.

4.5.4 Price is the ultimate determining factor

The biggest motivating factor for participants was price of the product. Price has previously been found to be a strong determining factor related to consumer food choices (Vanhonacker and Verbeke 2014) and economic constraints often overrule purchase intent (Napolitano, Girolami and Braghieri 2010). Animal protein is an expensive commodity, and beef and lamb remain some of the most expensive proteins in Australia; thus for consumers to be motivated by price is not surprising.

What motivates your purchasing decisions with regard to sheep or beef products? So when you are at the shop, what motivates what your purchase?

How much I've got in my purse. (Fiona, female, 45-54, Adelaide).



Do you seek out particular types of meat? Or is based on price?

Yep. Price, price, price. If cheaper I buy. (Chi, male, 45-54, Melbourne).

The current research was not necessarily interested in acts of ethical consumerism or willingness to pay, and thus did not explicitly ask whether participants would pay more for products with animal welfare claims⁹. Previous research has suggested that people often claim they are willing to pay more for animal products with higher welfare claims (Vanhonacker and Verbeke 2009). For some welfare issues, the incurred cost in altering production to animal welfare friendly methods may not be very high (Appleby 2005). However, Bray and Ankeny (2017) suggest that people may be willing to absorb the price difference for some ethical products (such as eggs) but not for others (such as meat) based on the relative price point for the conventionally produced product. Free-range pork and poultry products are the cheapest of the widely consumed meats so any additional claims such as free-range may result in the product remaining within the consumer's price point. In the case of red meat, any additional claims to an already expensive product will most likely put these products outside the

⁹ Willingness to pay for products with animal welfare claims was explored as part of the broader ARC Linkage project – See Malek, Umberger and Rolfe (2017) for some published results.

consumer's price point. However, as more red meat products with ethical claims, such as grass-fed beef, become more readily available and if consumers are wanting to purchase red meat over other proteins on a particular occasion, some may be willing to spend more on a product with ethical claims and in turn reduce their red meat intake to maintain their budget.

4.5.5 Summary

The relationship described between animal welfare and the resulting meat product further highlight that concerns about animal welfare are related to what people expect meat production to be. While price was the ultimate determining factor, many participants were interested in meat products with ethical claims such as free-range or grass-fed particularly as participants believe they are of better quality and fulfil higher animal welfare standards (although they may not understand what the labels mean). Participants also linked intensive animal agriculture and poorer quality products with supermarkets, suggesting that they prefer to purchase from a butcher due to product knowledge and superior quality. In this case, the butcher can be considered to be a key member of the pastoral narrative, relating back to the idea of traditional food production. Meanwhile, supermarkets are considered to be the ones responsible for poor animal welfare conditions, particularly because they are more concerned about profits than about animals. Ultimately, this research suggests that people are seeking products that are either produced under particular conditions (i.e. free-range or grass-fed) or sold by people (i.e. butchers) that are representative of what they expect livestock production to be.

4.6 Summary

As this chapter highlights, participants of the current research ultimately understand farm animal welfare as an issue relating to the animal's quality of life. Participants believe that animals are provided with a better quality of life when raised using natural and traditional production methods. While previous research (particularly from Europe) has suggested that people consider 'natural' and 'traditional' production as separate ideas (e.g. Boogaard, Oosting et al. 2011; Boogaard, Bock et al. 2011), the current research highlights that ideas about natural and traditional livestock production are blurred in the Australian context, becoming collectively representative of what participants believed to be 'normal' livestock production, or how they envisioned livestock production to be. This idea of what participants considered to be normal livestock production is generated from Australia's historical, and arguably mythical, pastoral narrative or rural idyll (chapter 1) as reiterated throughout popular media discourse (chapter 3 and 4.1) and Australian supermarket marketing campaigns (chapter 4.1). Participants also suggested they trust or have preference for actors which play an important role within the pastoral narrative, namely the farmer but also the butcher particularly as they were thought to provide better quality products (chapter 4.5).

The current research also highlights that animal welfare becomes a concern when the animal's quality of life is negatively impacted. This idea is demonstrated through participants having greater concern for the welfare of chickens and pigs raised in intensive systems (which are not part of the pastoral narrative), as compared to the welfare of sheep and beef cattle raised in what participants considered to be normal agricultural conditions. Similarly, any members of the modern meat value chain who do not have a place in the traditional agricultural narrative, such as the livestock transporters and the major supermarkets were considered by participants to be untrustworthy and often responsible for the poor welfare conditions experienced by the animal. While participants did not necessarily like the intensive methods used in some aspects of livestock production, participants did appreciate certain aspects of modern animal production such as the affordability and accessibility of meat (chapter 4.3). Boogaard, Bock et al. (2011) have previously highlighted this level of ambivalence: on one hand there is rising criticism about modern livestock production particularly as it has negative impacts on the animal's quality of life, while on the other hand people appreciate certain aspects of such modern practices as it provides safe and affordable meat products. This level of ambivalence is causing tension between the values of Australian meat consumers and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6. Ultimately, the research presented in this dissertation highlights that Australian meat consumers' value the idea of the pastoral narrative, particularly when reflecting on livestock production practices.

There is a number of points where Australian meat consumers can access information to inform their views about farm animal welfare. As mentioned earlier, the work of animal welfare activists has been of interest, particularly from the perspective of the Australian livestock industry. Thus, the following

chapter will introduce the animal rights activist organisations in Australia and discuss how Australian meat consumers respond to animal welfare activism, particularly on social media

Chapter 5 - Animal Welfare Activism on Social Media¹⁰

5.1 Introduction

The humane treatment of animals has been subject to much scholarly and public debate for many years, notably since the release of Ruth Harrison's *Animal Machines* in 1964 (Harrison 1964) and more famously after Peter Singer's publication *Animal Liberation* in 1975 (Singer 1975), with scholars describing Singer's book as "the biggest catalyst for change" (Pacelle 2015, p. 70). Singer's book "spurred advocates to form hundreds more local and national animal protection groups, including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals in 1980" (ibid., p. 70). Slowly, beginning with Harrison, animal rights advocacy and vegetarianism became virtually synonymous in Britain, followed by mainland and Nordic Europe, and moving to Australasia following Singer's publication (Preece 2008). Ultimately, animal rights organisations consider themselves to be "a voice of these voiceless animals" (Rodan and Mummery 2016, p. 381).

Animal rights movements stem from early animal welfare organisations. However, there is a difference between the two groups based on core values. Animal rights movements assert that animals should not be used as commodities, and instead insist on letting animals live according to their nature. As such, animals hold enough similarity to humans to deserve serious moral consideration and a life not lived according to human goals. Vegetarianism and veganism are considered synonymous with animal rights activism (Villanueva 2017): vegans do not consume animal products, including meat and dairy, nor do they wear leather, fur or wool. Vegans also do not support corporations which produce such items or engage in animal testing. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) suggest "animal rights means that animals, like humans, have interest that cannot be sacrificed or traded away just because it might benefit others" (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, 2017a). On the other hand, animal welfare advocates assert that animals may not be able to reason, and as such do not hold the right to have serious moral consideration, while acknowledging that animals are able to feel pain and suffer. Thus, animal welfare advocates propose that animals can be used as commodities but should be treated humanely in the process (Wiggins 2007; Wirth 2012). Traditional animal welfare advocacy organisations emphasise the humane treatment of animals. Such organisations work to provide shelter for homeless animals, promote spay/neuter programs and generally work to minimise animal suffering. For example, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is the most well-known animal welfare organisation operating in Australia.

¹⁰ Note to examiners: Results from this chapter have been published in the *Journal of Communication Research and Practice* (2018, Vol 4, Issue 3). The full text article can be viewed in Appendix 2.

The establishment of social movements stems from a desire to create social change. However, some social movements may not participate in activism activities. As defined by Martin (2007), activism is action on behalf of a cause, action which extends beyond what is conventional and routine. Activists are typically those who challenge normal social policy and practice, trying to achieve a social goal whilst not obtaining power themselves (ibid.). There are many varieties of activism, from face-to-face conversations to huge coordinated protests. What constitutes as activism is not clearly defined, so different people often have somewhat different ideas as to the definition of activism (ibid.). Such difference is hypothesised to stem from how strong an individual's values are, and how much the activism challenges such values.

Activists have been very vocal in discussions about farm animal welfare in Australia. Although activists have cast a negative view on animal production for some time, there has been a lot of concern from industry about increased activity by activists since the increased adoption of social media in recent years (Buddle, Bray and Pitchford 2017). Media interest in livestock production is often heightened after an animal rights group initiates a campaign against an animal industry or practice, or by some adverse event that compromises animal welfare (Coleman 2010; Schoenmaker and Alexander 2012; Tiplady, Walsh, and Phillips 2013; Munro 2014). While animal activist organisations still utilise traditional campaigning methods, such as billboards and protest, technologies such as smart phones and the generation of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have transformed the communication, collaboration and demonstration of activists globally (Monaghan 2014). Social media have created a "critical force in generating and disseminating information ... especially in situations such as protests, where public activism and media coverage form a key symbiotic relationship" (Ahmed and Jaidka 2013, p. 117). Monaghan (2014) suggests reasons for employment of social media include low cost of online communication, enabling a powerless resistance to organise against a resource-rich and powerful opposition; the dissemination of a collaborative message and collective identity across a widespread population which can be mobilised by activists in quest of interests perceived as core to that identity; and the ability to build communities around shared values and that adopt issue-based communication to reinforce the movement's identity. Australia's National Farmers Federation (2013) reported that it "seems clear that the well-resourced and coordinated campaigns waged by animal rights/liberation groups are having an influence on both consumers and retailers seeking a marketing edge" (p. 53). Industry asserts that organisations such as Animals Australia "use emotive language to spark rage among people uneducated in farming practices" (Littlely 2015, p. 13) and industry regularly reinforce that "animal activists are always on the hunt for images that can move public opinion" (News Limited 2015, p. 13). Increased concern regarding activist activity has resulted in key industry organisations encouraging farmers to be the voice of reason and offer authority while providing real insight into the red meat industry (Meat and Livestock Australia 2014), particularly on social media.

This chapter attempts to answer the research question relating to meat consumer's attitudes towards animal welfare activism. It introduces the main animal rights organisations which participate in activism in Australia – Animals Australia and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) – along with their mandates, and how such mandates translate to use of social media. Exploring how participants respond to animal welfare activism follows, particularly examining how animal welfare activism challenges their values. Themes arising from the data suggest several motivations for meat consumers' to dismiss animal welfare content received via social media outlets: activists only highlight examples of poor or uncommon practices in animal farming; activist organisations use concerns about farm animal welfare primarily to promote adoption of a vegetarian or vegan diet as opposed to reducing meat consumption or encouraging more ethical ways to produce meat products; activists and their supporters are ignorant of 'actual' animal farming; and people who shared information from activist groups via social media were not considered to be engaging in authentic activism.

5.2 Who are the activist organisations in Australia?

5.2.1 *Animals Australia*

Animals Australia is a not-for-profit organisation which promotes itself as "Australia's foremost national animal protection organisation" (Animals Australia 2014). The organisation was originally established in 1980 as the Australian Federation of Animal Societies by co-founders Professor Peter Singer and Mrs Christine Townend. Singer and Townend recognised a need to unite animal protection groups in Australia to provide a voice on behalf of animals. While they do not label themselves as an animal rights organisation, both Singer and Townend are renowned for animal rights advocacy and often promote veganism as a way of "cruelty-free living" (Animals Australia 2018b, para. 1). Representing 40-member groups and thousands of individual supporters, Animals Australia aims to investigate and expose acts of cruelty against animals and conducts "world-first strategic public awareness campaigns" (Animals Australia 2014, para. 2). With headquarters in North Melbourne, the organisation is overseen by a fifteen-member executive elected at an annual meeting of delegates from member societies and individual members. The activities of Animals Australia rely heavily on community support in the form of tax-deductible donations.

Animals Australia focuses on making animal welfare issues visible to consumers to influence consumer behaviour (Rodan and Mummery 2014). They achieve this by conducting investigations and public awareness campaigns on a range of animal welfare issues such as rodeos, the greyhound and horse racing industries, animal testing, the dairy industry, factory farming, and live export. Animals Australia became prominent in the media through their involvement in the Four Corners "A Bloody Business" exposé in 2011 (Doyle 2011) (described in chapter 3). Animals Australia's Lyn White was a major contributor to the exposé and subsequent backlash from the broader public was supported and

encouraged by the organisation, which ultimately resulted in the suspension of live export trade to Indonesia. Although trade was reinstated on the 6th of July 2011, Animals Australia have continued campaigning efforts. Various public protest rallies have been held across Australia, billboards have been erected in suburban areas, and campaign materials have been advertised on the back of buses and taxis in almost every capital city.

Animals Australia have a significant presence across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Facebook is their dominant platform, with over 1.56 million likes (Animals Australia 2017a), followed by Instagram with over 46,000 followers (Animals Australia 2017b) and Twitter with over 43,000 followers (Animals Australia 2017d) as of October 2017. They also have a YouTube account, with over 11,000 subscribers (Animals Australia 2017e) where they upload videos later shared via other social media channels. Animals Australia are often seen promoting a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle across all their platforms, using hashtags such as #govegan or #forakinderworld. They approach the promotion of veganism and vegetarianism through sharing recipes that demonstrate alternatives to meat dishes, or by trying to generate a strong enough emotional response through use of graphic imagery or footage to change consumption behaviour of viewers. They use images and videos to promote their cause, which either highlight perceived mistreatment of animals, often in intensive production systems, in attempts to elicit feelings of disgust or guilt amongst viewers; or emphasise the cuteness of animals, particularly farm animals, to cause emotional ambivalence amongst viewers. Often videos shared on their Facebook and Instagram accounts provide a graphic content warning to followers. They also comment on their Facebook posts, providing ways in which their followers can 'make a difference', as seen on October 12th, 2017 where they commented "every meal you eat makes a difference! Discover how you can help wildlife, the environment, and farm animals by simply eating delicious, plant-based food" (Animals Australia 2017a). Animals Australia also use celebrities to endorse their campaigns. One of their most well-known campaigns is the 2014 battery cage campaign 'that ain't no way to treat a lady', which featured celebrities such as Mick Molloy and Carl Barron (Animals Australia 2017c).

5.2.2 People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are the largest animal rights organisation in the world, with more than three million members (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2015a). Based in America, PETA was founded in 1980 by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco. The not-for-profit organisation is notorious for scandalous and extreme activism. What makes PETA more extreme in comparison to other organisations, such as Animals Australia, is that PETA members have historically participated in animal liberation activities. Founders of PETA wanted to revolutionise the way in which people could help animals and "sought to give caring people something more they could do and to provide them ways to actively change society" (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2015b, para. 2). PETA's mission is to promote a vegan diet, show how easy it is to shop 'cruelty free', protest

loudly and publicly against all ‘cruelty’ to animals and exposé what happens in animal laboratories (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2015b).

While PETA is a global organisation, and its campaigns can be translated across the globe, it is active in campaigning on country-specific issues. In Australia, PETA is known for campaigning against cruelty to sheep; first in the 1990’s when it brought to light the practice of mulesing (Wells et al. 2011, Sneddon and Rollin 2010), then again in the 2014 exposé of mistreatment of sheep in Australian shearing sheds (Buddle, Bray, and Pitchford 2017). PETA considers themselves as the force behind many successes for animals over their twenty-five-year existence. Whether it is campaigning for the freedom of domestic species from laboratories and intensive production systems, or stopping exploitation of wild species, PETA adopt various methods of community engagement, such as using celebrity endorsement to increase campaign profiling and gaining free media coverage through the use of eye-catching and provocative public demonstrations (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2015c).

PETA is a worldwide organisation, reflected by the greater number of followers on their social media channels as compared to Animals Australia. As of October 2017, over 5.3 million people liked PETA’s Facebook page (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2017a), over one million people follow their Twitter account (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2017d) and over 500,000 people follow PETA on Instagram (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2017b). True to their animal liberation philosophy, PETA often promote the vegan lifestyle, sharing recipes through their social media channels. Similar to Animals Australia, they use a combination of the cute, feel-good images of animals along with videos which provide graphic content warnings to their viewers. They also use celebrities as part of pushing their cause, such as an Instagram post from PETA using actor Leonardo DiCaprio to promote veganism (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2017c). Unlike Animals Australia, PETA are public about their animal rights positioning, clearly stating that “animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment” in their Twitter bio (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2017d).

5.3 Methods

The results presented in this chapter were collected using the same methods described in chapter 4.2. Participants were asked about how they felt about animal welfare activism within the same script used in interviews and focus groups (for details of the questions asked, refer to Appendix 1). The following results are from thematic analysis conducted based on responses to the questions on activism.

5.4 Participants responses

5.4.1 Definition of activism

To encourage participants to think about how they understand activism and the role it may play with regard to animal welfare, they were first asked to define their understanding of an activist. Although participants were not asked about individual organisations during this research, they generally held strong views about animal welfare activism and occasionally mentioned specific organisations. As described earlier by Martin (2007), activism is not well defined, therefore different people often hold different ideas as to what constitutes activism. Participants suggested that there is an ‘activism spectrum’ with those involved with PETA at the extreme end, while those engaging family or friends in conversation about food choices are at the other end of the spectrum. Participants also stated that being a vegetarian does not make you an activist. Generally, participants asserted that activists are vocal and take action to help their cause.

Nah, to be an activist to me means you have to engage the community in some way, either through government or by engaging. If you try to convince other people of being a vegetarian, even if it is only one other person, you’re being an activist. It’s a spectrum thing...if we belong to PETA you’re at one end of the spectrum. If you’re a vegetarian who tries to talk your sister into being a vegetarian, you’re at the other end. You can still claim to be an activist. (Angus, male, 45-54, Adelaide).



I don’t think being a vegetarian makes you an activist...it’s why are you a vegetarian? And then I guess the other part of it is how vocal you are about being a vegetarian? Like if you sit there and you know, have a go at people for ordering steak when you go out for dinner then that is getting into the activist stuff. Whereas, if you just order a salad because you don’t like the taste of meat, then that’s a different kettle of fish. (Sasha, female, 25-34, Toowoomba).



Activism? Well, that’s raising your voice against something that you disagree with.

Does being a vegetarian make you an activist?

No. Just makes you a murderer of vegetables. (Geoff, male, 45-54, Melbourne).

Any individual or collective action designed to identify and attempt to address an issue of public concern may be considered activism. Participants suggested activism can differ significantly based on level of action or involvement with the cause. Brunsting and Postmes (2002) consider that some causes demand very little involvement, termed ‘soft activism’, which includes expressing one’s opinion or persuading others, while other causes demand a lot more attention, or ‘hard activism’, such as starting

a petition or rallying. It could be argued that participants of this research considered the sharing of a Facebook post or trying to convince a loved one to become a vegetarian to be 'soft activism', while being a member of an organisation such as PETA and protest in the street are acts of 'hard activism'. Unlike participants from Brunsting and Postmes' (ibid.) study, however, participants from the current research expressed that you had to do more than share something on Facebook to encourage social change. This form of 'soft activism' is better known as 'slacktivism' and is discussed in further detail below.

5.4.2 Activists only share information about extreme cases

Animal activism in Australia has a reputation for being extreme (Rodan and Mummary 2017). Participants questioned the credibility of information being shared on social media regarding farm animal welfare, often suggesting that activists often only focus on worst cases, including sensationalised cases of abuse, or target those few who are failing to meet widely adopted welfare standards:

So if I know the source is an...animal welfare or animal liberation or animal activist group such as Animals Australia or PETA...I tend to take it with a grain of salt and [it] tends to make me agitated because I know that the people who they're targeting are...the minority. (Nick, male, 25-34, Toowoomba).

A common sentiment in this research was that content shared on social media by activist organisations and their supporters is exaggerated:

I often disregard a lot of what I see on Facebook. I think...a lot of the original articles I see are often published or it seems to me that they are published by people who have the worst, worst possible view on it. So I think a lot of it is possibly exaggerated...I just disregard it because you know I think it is just one really bad case, it's not the way everything is so why should I stop doing what I am doing because one really bad thing is happening? And that's not the standard. Like we're only seeing the worst of the worst. (Jason, male, 18-24, Melbourne).

When challenging dominant ideology, social movements may question how far they should push society to convince them of change. Freeman (2014) describes that animal right activists:

...face a classic communication dilemma that all counter-hegemonic social movements have historically faced. Should campaign messages be more pragmatic and utilitarian (ex. emphasising reform and human self-interest) or more radical and ideological (ex. emphasising justice, abolition, and altruism)? For vegan advocates, this means deciding between pragmatically meeting people where they are (ex: messages promoting meat

reduction and farmed animal welfare) or taking them further to challenge discriminatory beliefs (ex: messages promoting animal rights and veganism) (p. 17).

Visual material, such as footage of animal suffering, challenges discriminatory beliefs and aims to generate moral shock and sympathetic responses, with the end goal being political action (Jasper and Poulsen 1995). However, as Mummery et al. (2014) recognise, none of these strategies are fail-safe ways of creating political action. Sullivan and Longnecker (2010) also highlight that shock tactics may be counterproductive, leaving viewers unwilling or unable to act on their emotions after experiencing distress. Without specifically knowing what material participants have witnessed, animal welfare activism, particularly online, may go one step too far in attempting to convince meat consumers to stop eating animals. Participant attitudes towards animal rights activism is likely to be positioned within the deep social and cultural context of meat consumption in Australia, and animal rights campaigning may be too far from where the collective, dominant moral compass currently stands.

Doubting the credibility of an organisation may be a product of information selectivity, also known as 'confirmation bias' (Buttliere and Buder 2017). As noted previously, rejection of activism online by research participants was usually based on frequent association with vegan or vegetarian diets, which goes against the beliefs, attitudes, and values of meat eaters. One's prior beliefs and attitudes "should anchor the evaluation of new information" (Anderson 1981, p. 755), and depending on credibility of the evidence, one's opinion can be adjusted (Taber and Lodge 2006). Thus, people tend to connect with information with which they agree, but also tend to ignore information with which they disagree (Festinger 1957, Praiser 2011), which was clearly the case amongst the meat-eating participants of the current research. Edwards and Smith (1996) highlight that information one disagrees with is often considered to be of lower quality and importance. All of these factors combined result in undermining the credibility of activist organisations with regard to social media activity about animal welfare amongst consumers interviewed during this research.

5.4.3 Activists do not want us eating meat

A strong theme that emerged from the data was the connection between animal welfare activism and vegetarian or vegan diets. Some participants explained how activism they had experienced via social media is not about being concerned for animals, but instead is pushing what they considered to be a 'vegan agenda':

I think most of the animal activism I have seen or had any interaction with through social media particularly, because we tend to use Facebook, is not about animal welfare, it's anti eating animals. So the Animals Australia for instance umm and any issues we have had with regard to meat production... sometimes it is very thinly veiled as being about concern for animals in farm

situations, but in actual fact in most cases it's really pushing a vegan agenda. (Marian, female, 45-54, Melbourne).

Vegetarianism and veganism are examples of 'lifestyle activism', where individuals make life choices which align with their social and political principles and values. Modes of lifestyle activism can operate within a community, involve questioning of hegemonic culture and identity, and relate to social movement organisations (Villanueva 2017). Lifestyle activism is a "style of activism where the personal is political...a tactic for social change" (ibid., p. 220). Preece (2008) argues that the animal rights activist movements made vegetarianism "a visible and perceptible reality" (p. 300). Vegetarianism and veganism are considered as an approach to, and intended outcomes of, animal activism – inseparable from what it means to be an animal activist (Villanueva 2017). Unlike animal welfarists who "believe you can use animals for food and fibre providing the purpose is justified and their treatment is humane" (Wirth 2012, p. 175), animal rights activists usually adhere to the animal rights philosophy where use of animals for food or fibre is unacceptable. The inseparable nature of vegetarianism and veganism from animal rights activism is carried through campaigning, where animal rights activist organisations often promote ways in which people can reduce or abstain from meat and animal product consumption to better the life of animals. The synergy between vegetarianism and veganism with the lifestyle of animal rights activists is recognised and clearly rejected by participants of the current research, who describe animal rights activism as 'anti-eating animals', rather than an expression of concern for welfare of animals.

Promoting vegetarian or vegan diets alongside concerns for animal welfare may cause meat consumers to question their rationales about consuming meat. As Mika (2006) writes:

[W]hen one is confronted with personal and aggressive attacks condemning meat consumption, it is one's behaviour being condemned: the enemy is thyself....Thus, it could be that moral shock campaigns are ineffective...because condemning meat consumption (as opposed to other violations of animal rights) inevitably forces people to confront their own behaviour (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 (p. 932).

Based on this quote, it is unsurprising that meat consumers in the current research indicated that they ignore activist content or consider the content to be extreme. The values people adopt to orientate and justify their actions transform in different contexts of social interaction. Such transformation reveals itself through a shift in the hierarchy of importance which people give to certain values (Bauman and May 2014). Essentially, people select some ends above others, albeit consciously or by default. Not all values are consciously chosen – for many our actions are habitual and routine, so as long as these actions remain habitual, one rarely pauses to question the values which they serve (ibid.).

Habitual action does not require justification so long as an individual is not called to account by others or by sudden changes in the way one acts. The justification of one's actions may be difficult to face. If pressed, responses may include "this is the way things have always been done" or "this is how it is" particularly if habits have existed for a significant period of time without questioning (ibid.). As the participants of the current research were self-identified meat consumers, meat consumption can be considered habitual (although for some, meat consumption could be reflexive especially for those who seek ethical meats). Actions remain habitual so long as they are not required to be justified or legitimised. The values which inform such actions remain at a subconscious level and are only roused when it comes to making deliberative decisions, such as in situations where the values we obey are challenged, defied and questioned (ibid.). For example, animal welfare and animal rights organisations, along with associated adherents to vegan and vegetarian diets, often question the legitimacy of meat consumption in their campaigning efforts and may cause discomfort amongst meat consumers.

Rothgerber (2014) revealed that simply reading about vegetarians can result in feelings of guilt and dissonance among meat eaters. This dissonance is also known as the 'meat paradox' (as previously discussed in chapter 4) which describes the conflict generated among those who enjoy meat as what they view as part of a healthy diet when they consider the idea that consumption behaviours harm animals and result in their deaths (Herzog 2010; Joy 2010; Piazza et al. 2015; Bray et al. 2016). This tension results in the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, which refers to the mechanisms that humans put in place to overcome cognitive discomfort. Cognitive dissonance in this case is the ambivalence caused by the idea that an animal had to die to be able to consume meat. As previously outlined in chapter 4.3, Joy (2010) describes three principles or categories of justification that meat eaters use to preserve their commitments to eating meat and diffuse any guilt they might experience while consuming animal products, otherwise known as the "Three N's of Justification" (pp. 96-97). Piazza et al. (2015) have also described a fourth N, nice, based on the enjoyment that people experience while eating meat. Activism presented online hence may create discomfort amongst meat consumers by disrupting the ability to overcome cognitive dissonance, increasing their tendencies to ignore or disregard this type of information.

Although food can bring people together, it also can set people apart, performing exclusionary roles which isolate or reinforce 'otherness' (Anderson and Benbow 2015; Wright and Annes 2013). MacInnis and Hodson (2016) report that while the numbers of vegans and vegetarians are increasing in developed cultures, expressions of negativity towards them is common, particularly where meat eating is the cultural norm. As previously discussed in chapter 1, Australians have historically been some of the largest meat consumers per capita across the globe and meat is closely tied to Australian identity. Alonso and Krajsic (2016) highlight that meat-related products such as barbeques, steaks, and meat pies still dominate as elements considered as important in the make-up of the typical Australian diet.

Human relationships are considered to be “manifested through the sharing of food, certainly of meat” (Bohm et al. 2015 p.101) and any rejection of the ways in which Australians share meat may be associated with the dismissal of broader Australian community values (Fiddes 2004). This tension helps explain why vegetarians and vegans are often dismissed as strange and threatening (Cole and Morgan 2011), particularly by meat eaters, and why information from activist organisations is dismissed by participants of this research.

5.4.4 Activists are ignorant about ‘real’ farming conditions

Participants considered that content being shared on social media by activists does not represent what happens on farms and suggested that farmers do not have the opportunity or time to defend the production system. Participants questioned whether people would follow vegetarian or vegan diets if they had the opportunity to experience what happens on farm first-hand:

It’s hard because there is [sic] always people that go around and you like post something like that and then the vegans and the vegetarians will come in and go like “well we don’t eat meat and that is why we are against you” and it’s just like, I don’t know, like would they become vegetarian or vegan if they had known the farmers... if they had known what is actually going on behind the scenes? Like, would a portion of those vegetarians be meat eaters still if they saw what the farmers were doing rather than just looking at social media. (Georgia, female, 18-24, Adelaide).

As evidenced in the above quote, participants indicated that if farmers were more transparent through the opportunity to explain their methods of production and animal welfare related practices in more detail, activists (particularly vegans and vegetarians) would not be as critical of these practices (though they might well continue to practice vegan or vegetarian diets). However, it is well documented that vegetarians and vegans make considered choices when engaging in their lifestyles and use these as a means to foster change (Cherry 2015) and therefore are unlikely to engage with farmers or farming. Some participant opinions generated in this research align with the greatly criticised ‘deficit model’ of knowledge. The deficit model associates negative attitudes towards particular applications of science and technologies with ignorance resulting from a deficit in knowledge (Sturgis and Allum 2004). In this case, participants of this research commonly proposed a solution to counter what they viewed as inaccurate and untrustworthy online content about animal welfare whereby scientists and farmers communicate ‘facts’ to non-scientists and consumers, including activists.

However, as we know from available scholarship, relying on the deficit model and attempting to simply increase education and information provision is considered to be a key cause of increasing negative opinions towards the issue in question. Hart and Nisbet (2012) highlighted that science communication attempts aimed at increasing ‘knowledge’ (and therefore support for an issue or science in general)

are ineffective. Opinions or judgments about an issue are composed of facts as well as beliefs and values (Ahteensuu 2012). As already discussed, food choices, particularly decisions to consume meat, are deeply ingrained within social and cultural values. As such, it may not be the specific production methods about which people have concerns, but rather that the production method in question challenges their core values (in this case vegan or vegetarian diets and lifestyles), so much so that education and information are unlikely to change their opinions and associated activist activities (the opposite is also true: the provision of information alone is also unlikely to change the opinion of most meat eaters and this is why animal activists often use different tactics in their campaigning). The provision of more information, as suggested by participants, may further cement vegetarian and vegan beliefs associated with meat consumption – counter to what participants are aiming to achieve.

5.4.5 Animal welfare activism is a form of “slacktivism”

Some of our participants expressed scepticism about whether social media is an effective medium for activism, using the word ‘slacktivism’ (Glenn 2015; Wright 2016) to describe the sharing of content online:

Let’s not confuse activism with like slacktivism. Like posting on Facebook doesn’t actually do anything. (Edward, male, 25-34, Adelaide).

Slacktivism (also known as ‘clicktivism’ (Rodan and Mummery 2017)) is the extent of many people’s political involvement, they may consider they are doing something which will change the world by simply sharing information to their online network, often without any depth of discussion around the topic (Kien 2013). Participants in the current research stated that sharing content on social media was not an effective way to bring about social change, especially in terms of farm animal welfare. Animal welfare activists often publish e-petitions which are thought to be a ‘low-bar participatory act’ with little or no impact (Wright 2016). People also turn their social media platforms into ‘filter bubbles’ (Howard et al. 2016) or create micro-publics (Barbour, Marshall, and Moore 2014) which reduce the likelihood of exposure to new or opposing ideas. For example, if a user were to share activist-type content, there is a high chance that those already in their network have similar ideas about the issue, and thus they do not influence others to endorse their views.

While participants of this research considered online activism a form of slacktivism, such forms of activism cannot be completely dismissed as ineffective, evidenced by examples of highly productive forms of online activism used to complement traditional forms of offline activism. Franklin (2014) argues that slacktivism, defined as actions in support of political or social cause but regarded as requiring little time or involvement, existed long before the internet and will exist long after the popularity of social media platforms. Franklin (2014) goes on to describe that any serious political or social form of action in the current internet era requires an online dimension, which requires expenditure of energy to develop multi-sited and multi-skilled forms of strategy. Mummery and Rodan

(2017) argue that while actions such as clicking 'like' or 'share' can look less impressive against the spectacle of offline protests, activists clearly value social media as effective tools to raise public awareness around an issue, to show decision-makers that public attitudes are changing, and to help reveal that a collaboration of individuals are willing to take public action in relation to particular issues. In a study exploring the potential power of internet memes, Vie (2014) claims that while intangible, virtual support is still support and can lead to greater offline action over time.

Despite participant concerns about slacktivism, it is clear that online activism cannot be completely dismissed as ineffective even though their views showed scepticism about those who share activist content about animal welfare via social media and their motivations. The sharing of animal welfare activism online may be part of attempts to create activists' online identities, rather than true attempts to change the opinions or behaviours of those in the users' networks. The generation of a user's network is centred around how users generate and portray their online identities or 'performative selves' (Moore, Barbour, and Lee 2017). These identities tend to be individualised, lifestyle and issues based, rather than associated with conventional markers, such as class, race, or ethnicity (Dodson and Papoutsaki 2017). Some users may decide to share or interact with activist content on social media precisely because their values align with the content, but of course those whose values are not aligned are more likely to be sceptical, as in fact were most of the meat-eating participants of this research.

Participants said that animal welfare activists were dominant in the online conversation about animal welfare and that the views of farmers remained comparatively absent to those of animal welfare activists:

I think it is like you were saying, people aren't coming in and saying 'this is what it's like' like the farmers aren't coming up and showing people ... it is more the welfare people that are speaking louder so everyone is looking at them more. (Elise, female, 18-24, Adelaide).

As previously demonstrated in Buddle, Bray and Pitchford (2017) and documented in the current research, the considerable traffic generated by animal welfare activists online, particularly in extreme cases, does not necessarily indicate the success of this content in terms of changing public views. Content being shared by an individual or organisation typically only reaches their micro-publics. While large amounts of traffic may be generated by the sharing of activism to generate change, exposure to the content may be limited to within the relevant micro-publics. In the example of animal welfare activism online, while activists and industry do not share the same values, their online micro-publics interact and overlap as they both hold interests in what the other is doing (ibid.). Although this helps to explain the concerns that industry and farmers have about content being shared online, from the evidence presented in this research, it is evident that social media activism about animal welfare is ignored or 'taken with a grain of salt' by most Australian meat consumers.

5.5 Summary

Participants reported that they generally ignored animal welfare activism on social media. They articulated a range of reasons for their general neglect of animal welfare activism on social media, ranging from content being a misrepresentation of what occurs, an association between animal welfare activism and vegetarian or vegan diets or lifestyles, and that activism online is in fact merely slacktivism. This rejection of activism may also be a symptom of affected ignorance whereby people do not want to know about the methods used in factory farming (Williams 2008, chapter 4.4.2) and ultimately ignore anything which goes against what they believe is really happening. However, while participants suggested they ignore animal welfare activism, results presented in chapter 3 emphasise that the work of animal welfare activists is bringing the issue of animal welfare into the public sphere, particularly in relation to intensive animal agriculture. The findings presented in the current chapter suggest that although the adoption of social media has changed how issues about animal welfare are mobilised and communicated and may increase the overall exposure to the issue through social media in addition to conventional media, the content generated does not appeal to, or resonate with, meat consumers, as their values do not align with those of the activist organisations and their supporters. Ultimately, this chapter provides insight into how meat consumers may react to animal welfare activism and suggests that perhaps animal rights movements are pushing their agenda too hard and should instead focus on a more pragmatic and utilitarian approach as described by Freeman (2014). The following chapter brings together results from media analysis and focus groups and interviews to highlight the underlying values associated with meat production and animal welfare and discusses why animal welfare is of increasing concern in developed countries.

Chapter 6 - Values, risk and trust.

6.1 - Introduction

The aim of this dissertation was to uncover the underlying social and cultural values associated with Australian meat consumers' views on farm animal welfare. Using an adaptation of Dussauge, Helgesson and Lee's (2015) valuography methodology, this research clearly demonstrates that participants value meat as part of their diet, but the way in which it is produced puts their values in conflict. Such conflict arises when participants realise that the meat they are purchasing is not produced under the conditions 'they expect', but instead is produced under conditions which have a negative impact on the animal's quality of life. As discussed in chapter 4.6, participants of the current research ultimately understand farm animal welfare as an issue relating to the animal's quality of life. Participants prefer livestock production which is representative of the pastoral narrative and trust those people who central to what they expect meat production to be i.e. the farmer and the butcher. The current research also highlights that animal welfare becomes a concern when the animal's quality of life is thought to be negatively impacted. Production methods which do not fit within the pastoral narrative are considered to have a negative impact on animal welfare, while the members of the modern value chain whom do not form part of the pastoral narrative, such as livestock transporters and the major supermarkets, are considered by participants to be responsible for poor animal welfare. This idea is demonstrated through participants having greater concern for the welfare of chickens and pigs raised in intensive systems (which are not part of the pastoral narrative), as compared to the welfare of sheep and beef cattle raised in what participants considered to be normal agricultural conditions. However, as highlighted in chapter 4.6, Australian meat consumers do value some aspects of modern livestock production such as affordability of meat. Thus, this research highlights the tension and conflict experienced by Australian meat consumers between their values, as is discussed in greater detail below.

Firstly, this chapter highlights how the current research demonstrates that Australian meat consumers believe that the animals' quality of life is put at *risk* by modern methods of livestock production. As such, this chapter uses a 'risk' framework to develop a deeper and synthetic analysis of results presented in previous chapters, and to highlight how the animal's quality of life is thought by participants to be put at risk as a result of modern livestock production. As described above, modern livestock production also challenges idea of the pastoral narrative and what participants of the current research considered to be normal in the context of Australian livestock production. This analysis relies on Deborah Lupton's second edition of *Risk* (2013), focusing on her interpretations of the 'risk society' concept as discussed by Ulrich Beck (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1991, 1992), and the sociocultural constructions of risk utilised by cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas (1985, 1990, 1992). First, the

concept of risk is defined, with discussion of what is meant by the idea of living in a 'risk society' and the implications of this view. By highlighting who or what participants considered to be responsible for introducing risks into the meat value chain, the results presented in this dissertation exemplify how people construct and understand risks has changed over time, particularly in relation to food and agriculture.

Following the discussions about risk, this chapter talks about the involvement of the media and activism in communicating risks. Without bringing attention to modern livestock production methods through media, marketing or other means, the everyday consumer continues to enjoy access to relatively cheap meat. However, as demonstrated in chapter 3 and 5, the media and animal welfare activists in Australia have been involved in bringing to light the risks which modern livestock production methods pose to the quality of life of farm animals. Doing so has resulted in meat consumers having to reflect on how animal products are produced in comparison to the image of how they believe livestock production should be, bringing with it a level of ambivalence and conflict between Australian meat consumer values which will be discussed in further detail below.

At the conclusion of this chapter, it is argued that the industry needs to increase transparency about industry practices or continue to be at risk of criticism and consumer backlash when an exposé or issue comes to light. Bidirectional, high-quality communication between consumers and industry must increase, with both groups needing to talk about their shared values, particularly so industry can build and maintain consumer trust. Furthermore, suggestions from Goodfellow (2016) regarding ways to change the regulatory nature of farm animal welfare in Australia are discussed in relation to the results from the current study, including an analysis of which regulatory solution is likely to be most effective. This chapter concludes by outlining directions for future research that is required to gain better understandings about the relationships between issues of farm animal welfare, meat as a food source and the complexity of associated values.

6.2 – Consumer understandings of risk in red meat production

Participants in the current research valued natural and traditional livestock production methods as they were thought to be able to provide a better quality of life for the animal and were representative of what they believe farming should be. It was through the expression of these values by participants in the current research that it became apparent that modern livestock production put animal quality of life and their expectations about farming at *risk*. The following section summarises findings and argues that animal welfare is an issue of increasing concern in Australia because modern livestock production practices are viewed as putting animal quality of life at risk, and ultimately challenging what participants believe livestock production should be.

6.2.1 Theoretical perspectives on risk

Bauman and May (2014) define risks as dangers or threats which relate to what we do or what we refrain from doing. Previous scholars who have written on risk have described how the nature of risk has changed throughout history, specifically transitioning from pre-modern to modern and post-modern eras (Lupton 2013). The transition from modern¹¹ to post-modern time periods is of interest to the current research as it refers to the broader socioeconomic and political changes experienced by developed societies since the end of World War II (ibid.) which influenced the changes experienced in agricultural production as discussed in chapter 1. In his famous 'risk society' thesis, Beck (1992) argues that those living in the post-modern era are living in a 'society of risks' due to the significant change in potential hazards and dangers between modern and post-modern times.

Although Australia has not experienced many actual food scares, concern for such scares is centred on the *potential* that they may occur, as related to the 'always becoming' nature of risks (Lupton 2013). A risk is not something which already exists, but "it is a phenomenon that may happen sometime in the future" (ibid., pp.10), an "unrealised potentiality" (Rigakos and Law 2009, pp. 80). Risk and uncertainty are synonymous: the term 'risk' is often used to describe something that has the potential to deliver substantial harm, whether or not the probability of the potential harm is able to be estimated (Lupton 2013). Thus, anxieties related to food, in this case meat, are due to the *potential* for modern food production and provision methods to cause harm to someone or something, even if such risks may never occur (ibid.).

The greatest risks in food production are no longer associated with natural disasters, where crops may be damaged and livestock lost, but instead are symptoms of increased human intervention, particularly associated with scientific and technological developments (Milne 2013). Beck (1992) also argues that, unlike risks in pre-modern and modern eras, risks in the post-modern society are not physically tangible and cannot be sensed by the lay person. Instead, risks are invisible due to non-localised nature, resulting in society having to rely on experts to detect such risks. Scientific and technological advances have resulted in more intensive livestock production methods and have removed the necessity for people to be involved in the production and processing of livestock, moving livestock production 'out of sight' and somewhat 'out of mind'. As such, risks within postmodern meat production are not as accessible and easily sensed as many people are not involved in production, thus are invisible (ibid.).

As with other types of risks in postmodern society, risks related to livestock agriculture can be described as 'reflexive' (Lupton 2013). While people cannot detect risks, they are reflecting on the production practices which they believe are responsible for introducing the undetectable risks, hence why they become reflexive risks. Reflecting on methods used in animal agriculture is resulting in

¹¹ The term "modern" in this context is different to Boogaard et al.'s (2011) use of "modernity" as described earlier. Here, modern and postmodern are simply referring to time periods rather than any association with any other philosophical definition.

people seeking ways to overcome or steer clear of such risks. As more awareness about the methods of production used to produce meat develops, particularly about how these methods are putting the quality of an animal's life at risk, people are beginning to question and reject their use. However, the risk is not just to the animal's quality of life but the image of what people expect livestock production, and arguably agriculture more broadly, to be is also at risk. Rejection of intensive livestock production is demonstrated in the current research through participants expressing their dislike for intensive production methods in light of alternative methods, such as free-range or grass-fed production systems which are representative of what participants believe animal agriculture should look like.

6.2.2 Meat quality and safety at risk

The current research emphasises that animal welfare is perceived by consumers to not just be about how an animal is treated throughout its life. Animal welfare is an issue of increasing concern in Australia because modern livestock production practices not only put animal quality of life at risk, but in turn places quality of meat products themselves at risk. The risks which participants believed have been introduced to meat production are associated with scientific and technological developments in livestock production, particularly through increasing intensification experienced during the transition from a modern to post-modern society.

Risks are also related to meat are no longer associated with whether the meat has spoiled, but whether the meat contains some other form of 'contagion' (Rozin, Millman, and Nemeroff 1986) which may cause harm to the consumer, which in the current research is thought to be more likely to be introduced in intensive production systems. As outlined in chapter 4.3, participants talked about the impacts of stress on meat quality, and the impacts of animal diet and living in intensive systems on meat contamination and safety. Jackson, Watson and Piper (2012) contend that the concerns of consumers in developed countries are aggravated by food scares, such as BSE and *E. coli*, particularly as these risks have been introduced through new food technologies. While other developed countries have been subjected to significant food scares, Australia has only experienced relatively minor food scares, such as the *E. coli* contamination of Garibaldi smallgoods in 1995 (Founten 2011), the Hepatitis A outbreak in frozen berries in 2017 (Han 2017) and Listeria contamination of rockmelon in 2018 (Ho 2018). These types of food contaminants have been introduced in the modern food chain and require an expert to detect them which is why they are of increasing concern as there is little the lay person can do to detect and avoid such risks. Overall, concerns for modern livestock production expressed by participants in the current research are not only related to animal quality of life, but also the potential risk that modern methods pose to meat safety.

6.2.3 The risk of live export

An interesting example of risks associated with the welfare of farm animals arose in this research in relation to the issue of live export. Concerns about live export are an example of how an animal's quality of life and death is put at risk within modern livestock agriculture. Participants believed importing countries to have lower standards of animal welfare and use slaughter practices that participants consider cruel (i.e., specifically referring to halal slaughter). What is fascinating about this concern is the fact that participants are not consumers of the meat product this industry produces. However, concern is associated with the idea that it is the lives of 'our Australian' animals which are put at risk (Fozdar and Spittles 2014). What is particularly remarkable is that no participants suggested that the existence of the live export trade was due to Australians wanting alternative markets to sell their livestock to receive a price premium, as the industry is providing a desired product for the interested market which wishes to receive the animal live. Instead, it was common for participants to lay blame for this practice on those importing countries, who it was thought should ultimately be willing to accept a boxed frozen meat product over a live animal.

All of these themes are re-emerging in media reports of the most recent high-profile live export scandal where over 1,200 sheep perished on-board a ship destined for the Middle East, as first reported on the major Australian TV news program '60 Minutes' (Calcutt and Little 2018). However, the strongest message coming from the most recent controversy is that the industry cannot guarantee that these animals will make it to their destination unharmed, suggesting that the live export industry is willing to risk the lives of these animals in order to maintain the industry. Such claims have renewed parliamentary debate on the issue, particularly about the potential to change to a boxed-meat export trade as it avoids the potential risk of animal suffering and death on-board export vessels, similar to what was suggested by participants in the current research. Thus, concerns for animals within the live export trade echo the concerns for animals within modern and intensive systems as participants consider that the live export trade puts Australian animal quality of life at risk.

6.2.4 Media and activism involvement in communicating risks

The role of the news media in communicating and constructing risks cannot be understated. The news media are vital in drawing attention to certain issues and constructing what is considered a risk and how such risk should be interpreted and managed (Lupton 2013). Frewer, Miles and Marsh (2003) also highlight that sudden changes in content and volume of media reporting about a possible risk has the ability to change attitudes, particularly during the peak of risk reporting. The analysis in chapter 3 demonstrates how the issue of farm animal welfare has been framed by the print press media, with articles emphasising how intensive livestock industries impact product quality and put animal quality of life at risk. These perceived risks provide opportunity for the media to communicate who is

responsible and how risks can be avoided or overcome. Once again, government and industry were presented as those responsible for poor welfare conditions by the print press media, particularly due to their pursuit of greater profitability and productivity. Lupton (2013) also suggests that if individuals can be identified to provide a 'human angle' to draw attention to the news story, then the associated risk will gain more media attention. As animals are being given more moral status in the developed countries, stories of animal suffering and poor welfare standards, alongside potential risks associated with intensive livestock production, offer the news media 'newsworthy' content to attract maximum audience attention. Considering animals as sentient beings with their own personalities and emotions provokes the emotions of empathy and care within the reader, thus providing a 'human angle' which allows the media to communicate and construct narratives around the risks associated with the issue of farm animal welfare to attract and retain readership.

In more traditional forms of news media, certain experts are often used to speak about and define risk. Often these experts are those with medical or scientific authority, government officials or representatives of corporations (Lupton 2013). Many scholars have argued that it is very difficult for those who have different perspectives from these experts to receive attention in media coverage of risks (Anderson 2006; Hughes, Kitinger and Murdock 2006; Lupton 2013). However, the issue of animal welfare provides an important exception where alternative experts are beginning to appear frequently in the news media. The perspectives of animal welfare activists are often used with authority, and positioned against those from industry and government, as seen within the newspaper articles analysed in chapter 3. Activists exposé animal mistreatment and hold industry and government accountable giving them influential power when communicating about farm animal welfare. Such news coverage, together with a more general erosion of trust within science and government, has allowed activists to become recognised as experts with regard to the issue of animal welfare.

The proliferation of digital technologies linked to the internet have transformed the traditional gatekeepers of the news media. Accessibility to news has shifted from print and television to platforms where lay people are able to construct news, such as through livestreaming of events, and contribute to stories as they develop. As news media have begun to lose some authority, lay people are given more frequent opportunities to challenge expert opinions (Lupton 2013) and ultimately to become experts themselves. Activist websites and social media channels have provided a means for citizens to take action and alternative experts to flourish. Digital platforms allow for anyone to distribute and exchange information and requires lay people to evaluate content and decide who the experts are for an issue. While online activism has been dubbed 'slacktivism' or 'clicktivism', including by participants in the current research (chapter 5), these forms of e-activism still attempt to create change or generate awareness about an issue, such as risks associated with the intensive livestock industry. Animal welfare activists in Australia are prolific in their use of digital technologies, such as social media channels, to

generate awareness for their cause. While the rise of animal welfare activists as authoritative figures with regard to meat production cannot be attributed solely to their social and traditional media presence, it is clear that the power of these digital technologies, particularly for the communication of risk, cannot be understated and is changing the way in which people are exposed to and interact with information about agricultural production.

This research demonstrates that although the values of participants did not necessarily align with those of activists, animal welfare activists in Australia have played significant roles in communicating with consumers about the quality of life afforded to livestock animals, particularly in relation to the pork and poultry industries. Media reporting of activist activity has also proven important in communicating the potential risk which intensive livestock industries pose to animal quality of life in the livestock industry. Both the media and activists have played important roles in not only identifying the risk to animal quality of life and making animals visible but have also been active in communicating their views about who is responsible for the introduction of such risk, and providing alternatives for people to explore, with the media tending to suggest pursuit of more ethical meat products, while activists suggest avoiding meat and animal products altogether.

6.2.5 "Red meat production is not what we thought"

This research highlights that Australian meat consumers are concerned about the animal's quality of life, but this research also demonstrates that modern production methods are challenging how they expect animal agriculture to be. Throughout this dissertation, it has been clear that participants expect animal agriculture to be representative of the pastoral narratives described earlier in chapter 4.1. These pastoral narratives are full of big paddocks, with animals grazing and being able to do what is natural, while being attended to by the traditional 'Aussie' farmer. However, recent attention to livestock production methods by Australia's major retailers, the media and animal welfare activists have highlighted that these expectations are far from reality, at least in relation to pork and poultry production (chapter 4.3). The risk which modern livestock production puts on the animal's ability to experience a good life (and a good death) challenges what people think agriculture is and how they think it should be and hence this risk places values in conflict. Ultimately, animal welfare is a concern within Australia as modern production methods are not representative of what meat consumers, and arguably the broader public, believe animal agriculture should look like.

6.3 - Values in conflict

As previously highlighted, participants of the current research prefer production systems representative of those related to the pastoral myth but enjoy the cheap and abundant protein that intensive livestock production provides. Thus this research suggests that Australian meat consumers would like livestock production to be natural, traditional and modern simultaneously. This conflict

between what Australian meat consumers value generates tension and makes it difficult for people to reconcile and prioritise what they value most. Boogaard, Bock et al. (2011) have previously described such tension, suggesting that conflict between these values arise when people are faced with the two sides of modernity: the positive side (progress, efficiency and convenience) and the negative side (exploitation of nature and loss of traditions). These authors suggest that our relationship with modern livestock production has become ambivalent as people enjoy some of the modern aspects of meat production, such as price, while simultaneously criticising the practices used to produce meat. This tension between values is clearly evident within the current research as participants still wish to eat cheap meat but want it to be raised under traditional production methods. As the current research demonstrates, this ambivalence is responsible for causing a conflict in values amongst Australian meat consumers, leaving consumers having to prioritise their values and ultimately question their overall meat consumption.

6.3.1 Prioritising values

Tension between the various values of Australian meat consumers relating to meat production is making it difficult for consumers to reconcile and prioritise their values when purchasing meat. However, we know that values are expressed and prioritised based on the situation at hand. Connors et al. (2001) highlight that conflicts between values force individuals to choose between them and the outcome of such prioritisation depends on the situation. For example, in a time-restricted situation, values such as speed and convenience are given the highest priority (Hasnah Hassan 2011). Values therefore play an important role in people's actions (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004), such as the selection of which product to purchase at the supermarket. In some situations, particularly when considering farm animal welfare, meat consumers must consider their values related to price and convenience, as well as those associated with animal quality of life. However, prioritising these values is becoming seemingly easier with the rise of products with animal welfare-related claims on supermarket shelves, particularly as many of these products are affordable for the average consumer. For example, participants in the current research often suggested they purchase free-range pork and poultry products. As mentioned earlier, pork and poultry are the cheapest types of meats in Australia so although adding a welfare claim to these products increases price, the price may still remain within the consumer's grocery budget (Bray and Ankeny 2017). Thus providing these products at the consumer's price point makes the prioritisation of values easier and alleviates the tension experienced between values.

There is also evidence that Australians are seeking alternatives to meat or reducing the amount meat in their diet. As described in chapter 1, there are increasing numbers of people becoming vegetarian or vegan. There are also a number of plant-based alternatives to meat becoming readily available on supermarket shelves, such as the Funky Fields plant-based mince which sparked controversy between

supermarkets and farmers after its release in Woolworth's stores in June 2018 (McCarthy and Henderson 2018). Introducing such alternatives makes it easier for consumers to reduce their overall meat consumption, particularly as many of the plant-based alternatives are designed to simply replace the meat within a recipe. The plant-based alternatives are also allowing consumers to prioritise their values in ways which they have not been able to before – if they can still enjoy the social and cultural experiences of eating particular cuisine such as lasagne or burgers made with plant-based mince, it may become easier for them to select the plant-based alternative over the meat product. Of course, this is dependent on prioritising other values such as product price.

The tension generated between what participants value not only makes it difficult for them to prioritise their values at the supermarket shelf, but also for society to work towards a standard of animal welfare which is acceptable for all members of the meat value chain. Added complexity arises when considering that everyone prioritises their values differently: some will always choose the cheapest product available, while others may always select the product with welfare claims. This confusion and tension make it difficult to identify what the key areas of concern are and what kinds of conversations need to occur in order to understand shared values across the meat value chain. These results also question whether all members of the meat value chain will ever be able to come to a collective, acceptable animal welfare standard to allow for everyone's values to operate harmoniously.

6.4 - Re-instilling trust in animal agriculture

Much like other food industries, animal agriculture is experiencing a significant erosion of trust from the general public. As Blay-Palmer (2008) among others highlights, the declining trust in food is associated with long-term changes in the relationship between food consumers and producers where the former have become distanced from sites of production. However, declining trust is also associated with lack of transparency about methods of production and processing by the livestock production industry. For Blay-Palmer (ibid.), “[t]rust comes from asking the person selling you the meat where it comes from, how it was raised and killed. This knowledge reassures consumers...they are able to mitigate their fear” (p. 126). As highlighted by the current research, some consumers are turning to alternative types of products and retailers which they perceive provide greater transparency and more closely align with their values in order to overcome their concerns about modern livestock production (chapter 4.3).

6.4.1 Who is responsible?

As reflected in the current research, heightened awareness about intensive livestock agriculture has resulted in greater consumer reflection on who is responsible for the ways in which animals are raised and questioning whether they should be trusted with animal lives. Participants in the current research considered supermarkets, industry and the government jointly responsible for poor welfare conditions

(chapter 4.3). Similarly, the print press media suggest there is reason for people to be concerned about the ways in which farm animal welfare is regulated and monitored in Australia (chapter 3). The Australian Government is considered to be serving the needs of livestock industries by means of 'regulatory capture' (Goodfellow 2016), rather than listening to the concerns of the Australian public they serve. Both State and Commonwealth Departments of Agriculture have competing responsibilities in promoting productivity and profitability of agricultural industries while attempting to promote and protect farm animal welfare. However, this competition between responsibilities is not the problem, as there nearly always will be multiple responsibilities that need to be weighted and fulfilled: the difficulty lies with how the government prioritises each responsibility (ibid.). Print press articles analysed in chapter 3 highlight that industry and government continue to use economic rationales for industry practices. This theme is echoed in chapter 4 where participants suggested that industry and government are only interested in profits, rather than welfare of animals. Based on the significant relationship between the agricultural industry and government, it is not surprising that that they are both considered responsible for poor animal welfare standards.

Supermarkets were also considered responsible for poor animal welfare conditions. While the print press articles analysed in chapter 3 suggest that the major supermarkets, Coles and Woolworths, are champions for animal welfare, participants suggested that retailer investment in animal welfare friendly products had not occurred out of genuine concern for animal welfare but to generate greater profits. Carey, Parker and Scrinis (2017) highlight the involvement of the major retailers in farm animal welfare policy development, particularly through voluntarily adopting industrial free-range egg standards. Phillipov (2017c) also noted that the rise of the ethical food movement has been so significant that there is pressure on conventional retailers to provide more ethical choices for consumers. As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, retailers have also received significant scrutiny, particularly in relation to how they have treated Australian farmers. Due to their dominance within the Australian meat value chain, influence on food production methods, and assertion of participants that these retailers mistreat farmers, it is unsurprising that participants were concerned about supermarkets and their influence over farm animal welfare.

In contrast to the dislike for government, industry and supermarkets, participants identified butchers and farmers as those who could be trusted to provide animals with the quality of life participants expected. Butchers and farmers were described by participants as those who care about farm animal welfare and are able to vouch for the quality of life and death the animal experienced, as if they have more respect for the animal as an individual sentient being than other members of the value chain, such as supermarkets (chapter 4.3). Money was considered by participants to be one of the main drivers that interfered with farmers' abilities to provide better standards of farm animal welfare, while

supermarkets, industry and government were identified as being profit-driven and were not providing adequate support to farmers.

6.4.2 Developing dialogue about red meat production

The most important requirement for open communication is transparency. List (2018) highlighted that transparency is a metaphor which “contrasts with processes that are opaque or intentionally hidden. Transparency implies honesty” (pp. 174). Of course, this metaphor is related to how much people know and want to know. With reference to the topic of this dissertation, the value of such information lies in how it allows consumers to decide whether a particular food product is one they want to consume. For example, some consumers may not wish to know how animals are slaughtered, and processors may not be willing to share such information. However, some consumers do wish to know how the animal they are consuming has been produced, essentially to ensure that animal quality of life has not been put at risk and that the animal was provided a quick and humane death. If consumers do wish to know, this information should be accessible and honest, which requires a certain level of transparency from the livestock industry. If the livestock industry does not provide such information, it leaves the door open for other interest groups, such as animal welfare activists, to provide their views on this information instead.

Increasing transparency within the intensive livestock industry is likely to generate negative attitudes towards current livestock production practices as such practices may not align with consumer or community values. The current research highlights that there are already concerns about certain methods (chapter 4.1) and thus an increase in transparency in fact may provide justification for the existence of such concerns or even generate new concerns. This level of transparency may also result in consumers demanding greater change. What is becoming increasingly evident is that this demand for change will occur whether the industry is on-board or not. This demand is evidenced in the current research by participants expressing their preference for free-range/grass-fed products and their rejection of intensive livestock industries (chapter 4.1). In order to retain what has begun to be termed their ‘social license to operate’, the industry must open their doors and engage in more open communication, whilst being open to criticism and willing to change. However, communication must be bilateral: just like the industry, consumers need to consider the values of all the meat value chain participants to come to a set of mutually agreeable welfare standards. All members of the meat value chain need to acknowledge that there may be significant differences in values and some things may never be agreed upon, at which time an independent body may be necessary to make definitive decisions (as discussed below). This demand for transparency does not guarantee that consumers will make good choices in the eyes of the livestock industry, i.e. they may not make decisions based on scientific evidence, but it will allow consumers to make choices with which they are happier and which have greater alignment with their values.

Similar to responses to animal welfare activism discussed in chapter 5, a common response to consumer concerns about animal welfare from scientists and those working in the industry is that consumers simply lack the knowledge required to make 'rational' and educated decisions about meat production. This approach is related to what is known as the 'deficit model' which associates negative attitudes towards particular applications of science and technologies with ignorance resulting from a deficit in knowledge (Sturgis and Allum 2004). In contrast, Beck (1992) is critical of experts who consider lay people ignorant and argues that what might seem an 'irrational' response to a potential risk is in fact a completely rational response to the failure of experts to provide adequate responses to risks they have generated. As documented throughout this dissertation, values are deeply engrained within the particular social and cultural contexts which shape food choices, particularly decisions to consume meat. Cormick (2011) emphasised that when information is complex, people will base decisions on their values and beliefs rather than on facts. Cormick (ibid.) also highlights that public concerns about the risk of contentious science or technologies are almost never about the science itself. Therefore, attempts to increase 'knowledge' and support for an issue, or science in general, tend to be ineffective (Hart and Nisbet 2012) as opinions and judgements about an issue are established based on facts as well as beliefs and values (Cormick 2011; Ahteensuu 2012). Providing information to those who oppose or are unsure about the issue in hope to increase their knowledge and understanding, may exacerbate rather than alleviate concerns about the issue. Thus, industry communication strategies should be focused on shared values and appeals to consumers' existing beliefs, rather than trying to change beliefs.

There is also significant concern in Australia associated with the way in which animal welfare is regulated. As evidenced both within the print press media (chapter 3) and participant responses (chapter 4) analysed in this dissertation, there is a lack of trust in government and industry with regard to whether they are maintaining acceptable standards of farm animal welfare. As previously discussed, the current way in which livestock welfare is managed by the industry and government is of particular concern. As Goodfellow (2016) argued, the current structure of the Commonwealth and State Departments of Agriculture "leads them inevitably to prioritise measurable economic goals associated with profitable and productive primary industries, over the more elusive, less determinate public interests in farm animal welfare" (p. 229). Changes in the way in which animal welfare is regulated in Australia will help increase consumer trust in the industry as industry will no longer be the ones dictating the standards or influencing the government on the regulation of livestock welfare.

Goodfellow (2016) proposed that there are three options available for reform of current animal welfare regulation. The first is separation of competing responsibilities by introducing an independent animal welfare authority. Similar crises have resulted in establishment of independent authorities, such as the US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in the wake of the 2007-8 financial crisis (Kwak

2014) or establishment of environmental protection authorities (EPAs) in each Australian State and Territory. Goodfellow (2016) contends that equivalent authorities could be established for animal welfare, either based at the state level in accordance with constitutional requirements, or at a Federal level to account for the areas which remain the responsibility of the Commonwealth. Goodfellow's second recommendation is to appoint a regulatory contrarian or inspector-general/ombudsman for animal welfare. Such an entity would provide a contrary perspective to the prevailing bureaucratic thinking (McDonnell and Schwarcz 2011) and an important check on deficiencies in departmental performance (Goodfellow 2016). It is interesting to note that there have been previous attempts to establish mechanisms similar to these by the Australian Labor Party. In 2013, the Labor Party proposed an 'Independent Office of Animal Welfare' at the Commonwealth level, which later took the form of an 'Inspector General for Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports'. However, the Bill to establish the office was never introduced to Parliament as the Labor Party lost the Federal election two months later. Since then, the Coalition Government has maintained a policy of opposition to such reforms (ibid.). The third option for reform suggested by Goodfellow (ibid.) is regulatory 'tripartism' which proposes that a more prominent role for a relevant public interest NGO be established (ibid.). The adoption of regulatory tripartism would improve accountability and transparency of farm animal welfare regulation, but its success lies in the willingness of Departments of Agriculture to provide regulatory freedoms to the appointed NGO (ibid.). Goodfellow (ibid.) suggests that any reforms orientated towards promoting tripartism should be complementary to the establishment of an animal welfare authority, Inspector-General or Ombudsman.

Of all the suggested regulatory structures, the current research highlights that appointing an NGO is less likely to be acceptable, depending on which one is selected and who it represents. For example, animal welfare activist organisations are likely to think that appointing a NGO such as the National Farmers Federation or similar to monitor animal welfare standards would be unsuitable as they represent farmers who have a financial interest in livestock production. Similarly, the agricultural industry is likely to view the RSPCA as an unsuitable NGO due to its recent campaigning against common production practices such as cages in egg production. Ultimately, there is unlikely to be a suitable NGO to appoint due to differing values between potential NGOs and the value chain participants which they are representing or regulating. Thus, the introduction of an independent office for animal welfare or appointment of an inspector-general/ombudsman for animal welfare are more likely to be acceptable routes to regulate farm animal welfare in Australia. Introducing a dedicated individual or office to oversee farm animal welfare will increase the level of transparency in the regulation and monitoring of farm animal welfare and will not require an existing NGO to adjust their current positioning or values. Regardless of the direction taken, reform is required to correct imbalances in animal welfare regulation; to restore legitimacy not just in government but in the

livestock industry; and to take action towards the mounting public interest in animal welfare within Australian systems of government (Goodfellow 2016).

6.5 - Conclusion

The current research highlights the values of Australian meat consumers relating to the advantages of natural and traditional agricultural production, methods which participants considered to provide a better quality of life to the animal. However, as discussed, concerns about animal welfare are not necessarily about the animal itself but extend to concerns about food quality and safety. Australians clearly value accessibility to affordable protein made possible by current intensive production practices, but this research demonstrates that people are becoming increasingly reflexive about how meat is produced. The rise in popularity of products with welfare claims is evidence of such reflexive behaviours. Understanding what contributes to and who is considered to be responsible for these concerns will help create dialogue within the meat value chain to generate an understanding of everyone's understandings and values to generate a greater sense of trust. The complexity of consumer values needs to be considered and understood by other members of the meat value chain when communicating about farm animal welfare, instead of lay people's views being dismissed due to perceived ignorance. Similarly, based on the stark difference in opinion and values which exists between producers and animal welfare activists, communication strategies from the agricultural industry need to avoid trying to change the opinions of activists and instead target those who are unsure or value meat as part of their diets. Such communication strategies should acknowledge the variety of different opinions and values which exist in Australia and focus on communication of the values they share with consumers and the broader community.

Communication needs to be bilateral. When beginning to consider the understandings of other value chain stakeholders, complexity of the farm animal welfare issue changes drastically. While there has been research undertaken in other developed countries to explore other value chain stakeholders' understandings of animal welfare (i.e., Vanhonacker et al. 2010), Australia differs due to the combination of agricultural production methods and its position as a major red meat exporter, resulting in different social and cultural values. The different setting requires research to be conducted to understand how other value chain participants conceptualise the issue of farm animal welfare within Australia to enable dialogue and to develop a shared understanding of how livestock animals are raised and processed for meat across the meat value chain.

In relation to animal welfare/rights activism, further research is warranted on several topics, for example to assess whether animal welfare activism online is more trusted by those who do not identify strongly as meat eaters and are already questioning their consumption habits, and whether emerging uses of social media (such as lifestyle, wellness, and celebrity blogging) which connect identity to

animal welfare concerns are more effective than current strategies. Although many people now receive information online, they choose the content that they see largely based on their pre-existing views and behaviours, and it is filtered in large part by the micro-publics in which they participate. This research has also shown that current social media use by activist organisations to promote animal welfare does not appear to be an effective strategy to communicate with or change the behaviours of meat eaters and may even reinforce the lack of shared values between meat eaters and non-meat eaters. While social media may 'amplify' animal welfare activist content, it is unlikely to engage those who identify as meat consumers and may be less influential than it may initially appear based on the quantity of coverage particularly in connection with exposés and similar high-profile and extreme issues.

There is also a necessity for change in the way in which farm animal welfare is governed and legislated in Australia to overcome trust issues both in government and industry. The current power which the livestock industry has in influencing agricultural policy development is fuelling public concerns, resulting in a significant amount of attention from animal welfare activists and advocacy organisations. The Australian Government need to either take a step away from promoting productivity and profitability of the agricultural industry, which will prove difficult based on Australia's historical ties with agricultural production and agriculture's contribution to Australia's gross domestic product or recognise the increasing concerns of the public which they represent and work towards a more transparent regulatory system. Without significant changes in governance, livestock industries will continue to face scrutiny and could ultimately lose their 'social license to operate'.

There is also significant evidence that Australians are becoming reflexive in their meat consumption practices for other reasons, including health and environmental sustainability (Roy Morgan Research 2016). Further research is required to understand the reasons driving people to explore plant-based alternatives, and where information about meat consumption and meat consumption reduction strategies is coming from. The various drivers for adopting a plant-based diet also need to be disentangled to understand the emphasis placed on each driver. Identifying the roles which animal welfare activists have in communicating messages about animal welfare and plant-based diets will help the meat industry tailor their communication strategies for consumers, particularly through a better understanding of how animal welfare activists' campaigns are becoming increasingly successful.

Ultimately, this dissertation has highlighted that Australian meat consumers are concerned about the welfare of livestock animals and how these concerns are tied to and challenge their values. This research emphasises that animal welfare is clearly an issue which extends beyond a focus on how the animal is treated and adds to the broader understanding of the social and cultural context in which concerns about meat production in Australia are grounded.

Appendix 1: Interview and focus group script

Getting to the meat of the matter: social and economic issues in animal welfare in Australia's livestock industries

My name is [researcher] and I'm a researcher at the University of Adelaide. Our research group is interested consumer attitudes to and understandings of animal welfare in the Australian meat and livestock industries. We want to get a snapshot of where attitudes towards animal welfare in the Australian meat and livestock industry are at the moment, and how consumer attitudes and values compare to those of producers and retailers.

We are using short interviews as one way to collect information. We are also using focus (discussion groups) and online surveys.

The interview will take approximately 20 minutes. We will be asking for some information about you as well as about your food choices. In return we will provide you with a gift voucher worth \$15.00 in appreciation for your time. We will record the interviews and the audio recordings will be transcribed and used for our analysis. Only the researchers (and the transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to the audio files and notes taken during the interviews. All identifying information will be removed during the transcription. Any information collected in this research remains confidential and you will not be identified as a resource or referenced in any publications. The records will be kept in a secure facility for at least 5 years after any publication arising from the work.

You can withdraw at any time from the study without prejudice and all comments will be destroyed.

The University's Human Research Ethics Committee is obliged to monitor approved research projects. In conjunction with other forms of monitoring, research participants are provided with independent and confidential avenue for raising concerns regarding the conduct of any research in which they are involved. As such, an Independent Complaints Form has been provided to you.

Are you willing to proceed and participate in the study?

(participant number _____ for the recording)

Are you a regular consumer of meat?

- Yes
- No

If answer no, end the interview

What is your age group?

- Under 18 years of age
- 18 - 24 years of age
- 25 - 34 years of age
- 35 - 44 years of age
- 55 - 64 years of age
- over 65 years of age

If Under 18 years of age the end the interview

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your Australian postcode? _____

What is your average household income?

- Rather not say
- less than \$50,000 gross per annum
- \$50,000 to \$100,000 gross per annum
- \$100,000 to \$150,000 gross per annum
- \$150,000 to \$200,000 gross per annum
- Over \$200,000 gross per annum

What is your marital status?

- Single
- In a relationship but live apart
- Married or in a de facto relationship

Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Primary school
- Secondary (high) school
- TAFE or technical institution
- University degree
- Postgraduate degree

What are your current work hours?

- Full time
- Part-time
- Casual
- Not currently working

What are your current study hours (as an enrolled student)?

- Full time
- Part-time
- Not currently studying

Now I'm going to ask a series of questions about your understanding of farm animal welfare.

What kinds of images come to mind when you think of

- Sheep farming?
- Beef farming?

Do you think farmers care about the welfare of their animals?

- What is your evidence for this belief?
- Have you had any particular experiences that have informed or shaped this belief?
- In your opinion, do farmers do enough to ensure good animal welfare?
 - Should farmers do things differently?

- Are there things stopping farmers from doing things differently?

What do you think affects the welfare of sheep/beef cattle?

- What practices used in sheep or cattle production do you think are inhumane?

What motivates your purchasing decisions with regard to sheep or beef products?

- Does the welfare of the animal play an important part in your decision?
- Do you often encounter animal-friendly products?
- Do you actively seek out particular types of sheep or beef products? (Grain-fed, grass fed, organic etc.) Why or why not?
- Is there anything you avoid based on your opinion of animal welfare?
- Where do you typically purchase meat and why?

What is your understanding about the impact of animal welfare on meat quality?

When you think about sheep and beef cattle welfare, do you ever consider the associated abattoir/slaughter process? Why/why not?

What influences your image of farm animal welfare?

i.e. news stories, activism, friends, farming friends, personal experience

What do you think about wool or leather products?

- Do you use them or avoid them? Why?

Do you believe you have adequate knowledge about sheep and beef cattle production for your purposes? Is there any issue that you are unsure associated with beef and sheep production? Would you like to know more?

Social media/Activism questions – if time permits

Have you ever sought out information about farm animal welfare? What information did you use?

- Labelling, Google search, asking people (producers at farmers market, butcher, friends), social media, library or print literature

Have you ever seen information about farm animal welfare on social media?

- Do you take notice?
- What kinds of information do you see?
- Who does the information come from?
- How do you feel about what you see?
- Has it changed the way you think about farm animal welfare?

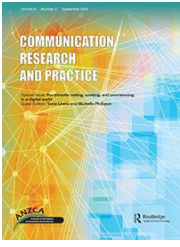
Which animal welfare organisations do you follow or trust, if any?

- Have animal welfare organisations changed the way you think about farm animal welfare? How?

How do you define activism?

- What behaviours do people display if they are an activist?
- Does being a vegetarian make you an activist?
- If you only buy grass-fed beef based on the idea that it has better animal welfare qualities, does that make you an activist?

Appendix 2: Journal publication



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Why would we believe them? Meat consumers' reactions to online farm animal welfare activism in Australia

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Why would we believe them? Meat consumers' reactions to online farm animal welfare activism in Australia

Emily A. Buddle , Heather J. Bray  and Rachel A. Ankeny 

School of Humanities, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

ABSTRACT

The use of social media by animal activist organisations is of interest to those in the livestock production industries because of the perceived increased use and effectiveness of this medium for influencing consumers. Using qualitative data derived from focus groups and interviews, we explore how Australian meat consumers interact with animal welfare activism content posted to social media, either by activist organisations or members of the participants' networks. Results indicate that meat consumers dismiss online animal welfare activism due to a perceived lack of credibility and being associated with a vegetarian or vegan 'agenda'. Activists also were considered by participants to be 'ignorant', with participants suggesting they needed to experience animal farming first hand. Online activism was described as 'slack-tivism' by our research participants, who felt that sharing something online does not create actual change in the real world and hence is not an authentic or meaningful form of activism. While farm animal welfare is of increasing concern to Australian consumers, this research suggests that information generated by activist organisations and shared via social media is unlikely to change meat eaters' perceptions, at least in the current form in which it is being provided.

KEYWORDS

Social media; animal welfare; activism; meat

Introduction

Media representation is an important way for readers to generate meaning about an issue about which they have little direct experience (Packwood Freeman, 2009). Due to increased urbanisation and a reduction in the number of people involved in agriculture, people are increasingly reliant on the media for information about the welfare of farm animals raised for food (Packwood Freeman, 2009; Singer, 1990; Tonsor & Olynk, 2011). These issues are especially relevant in Australia, which has one of the highest rates of meat consumption in the world; Australians consumed 45.3 kg of chicken, 27.9 kg of pork, 27.6 kg of beef, and 10.6 kg of lamb per capita in 2015 (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, 2016). Meat has long been considered as essential to Australian meals (Santich, 1990), with meat consumption being embedded in Australian culture as

CONTACT Emily A. Buddle  emily.buddle@adelaide.edu.au

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illustrated by various Australian Day media campaigns disseminated by Meat and Livestock Australia to promote the consumption of lamb (Ankeny, 2008; Chen, 2016).

In this article, we use thematic analysis of interview and focus group transcripts to examine Australian meat consumers' perceptions of animal welfare activism activities that they have seen on social media. These data are from a larger project which aims to explore Australian meat consumers' attitudes towards animal welfare in the Australian sheep meat and beef cattle industries. Our findings suggest that meat consumers do not engage with information about animal welfare shared via social media by animal welfare activist organisations either directly or via people within the participants' networks. This is because meat consumers do not consider animal welfare activists as credible sources of information. Themes arising from the data suggest several motivations for meat consumers' dismissal of animal welfare content received via social media outlets: activists only highlight examples of poor or uncommon practices in animal farming; activist organisations are using concerns about farm animal welfare primarily to promote the adoption of a vegetarian or vegan diet as opposed to reducing meat consumption or encouraging more ethical ways to produce meat products; activists and their supporters were ignorant of 'actual' animal farming; and people who shared information from activist groups via social media were not considered to be engaging in authentic activism. We draw on literature from a range of disciplines, and in particular psychology, to explore why meat consumers might use these particular strategies to dismiss animal welfare information, including confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance. We conclude that while social media may 'amplify' animal welfare activist content, it is unlikely to engage those who identify as meat consumers, and may be less influential as it may initially appear to be based on the quantity of coverage particularly in connection with exposés and similar high-profile and extreme issues.

Literature review

Over 25 years ago, Peter Singer (1990) noted that the media were doing a poor job at educating the public about ethical considerations associated with intensive animal farming. Since then, media attention to welfare in animal agriculture has increased significantly and helped to create a major shift in attitudes to farm animal production (Packwood Freeman, 2009). Media interest in livestock production is often generated after animal activist groups initiate campaigns against an industry, or by some adverse event that compromises farm animal welfare (Coleman, 2010; Munro, 2014; Schoenmaker & Alexander, 2012; Tiplady, Walsh, & Phillips, 2013). For example, the treatment of Australian farm animals has been a recent focal point for activist organisations such as Animals Australia in initiatives including the 'Make it Possible' campaign aimed at intensive animal production (Rodan & Mummery, 2014) and the caged egg campaign 'No way to treat a lady' (Bray & Ankeny, 2017a). In these campaigns, activists use traditional media in conjunction with various media platforms, including social media, to disseminate information to a large, diverse audience (Rodan & Mummery, 2014). Animal welfare activists adopt multiple platforms to disseminate their message as widely as possible, and to generate a 'media circuit' to promote collective awareness and action to facilitate social and legal reform (Rodan & Mummery, 2014). Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have enhanced activists' abilities to

communicate, collaborate, and demonstrate globally (Monaghan, 2014) and have created a 'critical force in generating and disseminating information...especially in situations such as protests, where public activism and media coverage form a key symbiotic relationship' (Ahmed & Jaidka, 2013, p. 117).

There are symbiotic relationships between public activism and the media because activism often meets the media's news values. News values give journalists and editors a set of rules by which to work, determining when and whether a new event becomes newsworthy. Brighton and Foy (2007) state that a matrix system is needed to prioritise events, and to filter them into levels of applicability and significance to the audience. Stories become particularly newsworthy when they generate emotional conflict or unrest within the audience. Schultz (2007) argues that six news values tend to dominate: timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict, sensation, and exclusivity (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). Given that the welfare of farm animals in Australia is of increasing concern, stories which highlight the mistreatment of animals are likely to align with dominant news values as they create an element of conflict and disturbance within their audience, and also are highly relevant and timely. Positive news stories about livestock production are much less likely to match dominant news values particularly due to the absence of conflict generated within the audience. For this reason, it may be possible that much less media coverage based on the perspectives of livestock producers is generated by social or traditional media, thus giving more airtime to those who oppose livestock production.

Increased availability and sales of animal products with welfare claims also have heightened concerns about farm animal welfare (Bray & Ankeny, 2017a). However, purchasing habits also are closely tied to media exposure, as animal welfare is a credence attribute (Nocella, Hubbard, & Scarpa, 2010) about which consumers form quality perceptions based on extrinsic cues such as labels or media reporting. Although labels are the primary source of information at the point of purchase (Bray & Ankeny, 2017a), there is still a great deal of scepticism and confusion amongst consumers about animal welfare friendly labels, thus leaving media to be the dominant source of animal welfare information. Tonsor and Olynk (2011) found a link between negative animal welfare information presented in the media and a decline in meat demand in the U.S. McKendree, Croney, and Windmar (2014) also found that recent media attention about pork in the United States of America had resulted in 14% of participants having reduced their pork consumption by up to 50% due to animal welfare concerns. Specifically in Australia, Dole (2017) reported that meat sales dropped by 15% due to 'public revulsion' over animal cruelty as seen in the Four Corners' *A Bloody Business* exposé.

Although meat consumption has traditionally been normalised in contemporary Western cultures, it is becoming an increasingly reflexive practice with a range of meat-reducing strategies being explored by many consumers. Decisions to reduce meat consumption typically are driven by conscious motives which are either personal, such as those aimed at personal well-being or health, or by moral considerations such as the concern for another's well-being, including nonhuman animals or the environment (De Backer & Hudders, 2014). Meat-reduced diets limit the type, quantity, and/or frequency of meat in someone's diet. Such diets are in abundance and include low-meat/plant-based diets such as the Mediterranean diet, forms of semi-vegetarianism and 'flexitarianism', and pescetarianism, lacto-ovo-

vegetarianism, and veganism (Hayley, Zinkiewicz, & Hardiman, 2015). As Galusky (2014) notes: '[c]hoices about what to eat expand beyond taste and become expressions of value and demands for solutions' (p. 932). Reports from Roy Morgan Research (2016) are beginning to show that many Australians are reducing their meat consumption, citing reasons including health, environmental concerns, and animal welfare. There is also an increased prevalence of campaigns from movements such as Meat Free Mondays (www.meatfreemondays.com) (Collins, 2017). Such movements have used both online and offline forms of campaigning to deliver their messages. For example, Meat Free Mondays commonly use magazine and newspaper advertising in association with social media channels such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/supportmfm/>). The impact of offline campaigning or activism on people's attitudes towards animal welfare does not fit within the scope of this article. However, whether such campaigns impact people's decisions to reduce meat consumption does warrant further scholarly inquiry.

While traditional forms of activism remain prevalent offline, online advocacy now plays a critical role in the work of social movements. Activists can influence individuals and gain support for their causes through many online platforms. While experts and journalists have previously referred to the enthusiastic and prolific adoption of social media by activists as 'the Facebook/Twitter revolution' (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 2), social media as a platform for advocacy has since become widely adopted. More recently, the Web 2.0 digital media have developed, allowing for the sharing of content across multiple platforms including online mainstream news sites. They also enable the interconnection of materials and messages to allow information from celebrities, online journalists, and other bloggers to be disseminated through retweets and sharing (Mummery & Rodan, 2017).

While activists have been of concern to the Australian livestock producing industries for quite some time, their use of social media has been of particular interest in recent years. In 2011, the Australian Broadcasting Commission's current affairs programme 'Four Corners' aired the report *A Bloody Business* (Ferguson & O'Brien, 2011), which highlighted the mistreatment of Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs (Tiplady et al., 2013). Animals Australia's chief investigator Lyn White obtained the footage and was heavily involved in creating the programme. Subsequently, Animals Australia ran an online campaign, creating a website titled 'Ban Live Export' (Tiplady et al., 2013) which was quickly endorsed by the social networking site GetUp!, launching its fastest-ever petition campaign and receiving 35,000 signatures in just 5 h (Schoenmaker & Alexander, 2012). The websites for the Royal Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and Animals Australia consequently crashed after receiving 2,000 visits per minute. Animals Australia relied heavily on their Facebook and Twitter profiles to share information during the campaign. This web-based blitz was supported by traditional media campaigning, and the ultimate suspension of trade to Indonesia was said to be the result of the overwhelming response from the public (Munro, 2014). While the multipronged approach to this campaign contributed to its overall success, there is no doubt that the adoption of social media strategies has changed the mobilisation of activism, adding multi-directionality to communication and giving greater voice to those wanting change in society (Picard, 2015). Hence this article explores

the attitudes of Australian meat consumers towards content posted on social media by animal welfare activists.

Methods

This research was approved by the University of Adelaide's Human Research Ethics committee (H-2012-262) and conducted according to Australian national guidelines (National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council, and the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee, 2007). Data for this article were collected using focus groups and 'mall-intercept' interviews (Bush & Hair, 1985), with the latter primarily to provide balance for the overall sample in terms of demographics, particularly socioeconomic status. The research was conducted in Adelaide, South Australia (population of approximately 1.2 million); Melbourne, Victoria (population of approximately 4.65 million); and Toowoomba, Queensland (population of approximately 115,000). Participants of focus groups were recruited through community announcements, social media announcements and flyers distributed at public events. Only those over the age of 18 and who identified as meat consumers were eligible to participate in focus groups and interviews. Overall, 66 meat consumers from across Australia participated in the research during 2015 and 2016. Of these participants, 67% were women. Participants' ages ranged from 18–24 years to over 65.

Focus groups and interviews were structured and included a series of discussion points about farm animal welfare more broadly; however, this article focuses on the responses collected from meat consumers when questioned about how they respond to social media content from animal welfare activist groups. During focus groups and interviews, participants were asked whether they had seen animal welfare activism through their social media channels and how they reacted to what they had seen. Content about animal welfare activism, which participants encountered, included video footage and imagery highlighting the alleged mistreatment of farm animals. Content shared could either be directly from an animal welfare organisation, such as Animals Australia, or by someone within the participants' networks.

Focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded, then fully transcribed, anonymised, and checked for accuracy against handwritten notes. Transcripts were treated as rich, narrative texts and coded using methods similar to 'open-coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, our methods are not strictly based on traditional grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), but we instead use the generic inductive qualitative model (Hood, 2007; Maxwell, 2005) which incorporates the process with description and interpretation during the generation of research questions, as well as purposeful sampling including demographic-based recruitment, thus strengthening our abilities to generalise for instance cross-population and to other locations. However, our methodology does not seek strict representativeness or statistical significance due to the qualitative nature of the research methods (Bray & Ankeny, 2017b; Hood, 2007), and places greater emphasis on what was said by participants, rather than on how many participants made one particular type of claim. Quotes used in the results and discussion are illustrative, and are typical of those coded to the theme identified during analysis.

Results and discussion

Almost all participants in this study who mentioned seeing animal welfare activist content on social media claimed that they did not engage with it, or even dismissed the information, because they did not view animal welfare organisations as credible sources of information about farm animal welfare issues. Even information shared by those within the participants' personal network was dismissed as it originated from animal activist organisations. Key themes emerging from the data as to why activist organisations were not seen as credible sources of information to be analysed in more detail next were that participants linked animal welfare activism with the promotion of vegetarian or vegan diets; animal welfare organisations were considered to be untrustworthy and in particular that the information shared by them, and those who support them, was often based on extreme and nonrepresentative cases; activists and their supporters were thought to be ignorant of what actually happens on farms; and participants considered social media activism to be a form of 'slacktivism' and not an authentic or meaningful form of activism.

Activists do not want us eating meat

While Australians are exploring ways in which they can reduce meat within their diets as noted previously, resulting in a slow shift away from Australia's meat-eating cultural norm, a strong theme that emerged from this research was the connection between animal welfare activism and a vegetarian or vegan diet. Marian from Melbourne explained how the activism that she has experienced via social media is not about being concerned for animals, but rather is pushing what she termed a 'vegan agenda':

I think most of the animal activism I have seen or had any interaction with through social media particularly, because we tend to use Facebook, is not about animal welfare, it's anti eating animals. So the Animals Australia for instance umm and any issues we have had with regard to meat production... sometimes it is very thinly veiled as being about concern for animals in farm situations, but in actual fact in most cases it's really pushing a vegan agenda.

Although food clearly can bring people together, it also can set people apart, performing exclusionary roles which isolate or reinforce 'otherness' (Anderson & Benbow, 2015; Wright & Annes, 2013). MacInnis and Hodson (2017) report that while the numbers of vegans and vegetarians are increasing in Western cultures, expressions of negativity towards them is common, particularly where meat eating is the cultural norm. As previously discussed, Australians have historically been some of the largest meat consumers per capita across the globe and meat is closely tied to Australian identity. Alonso and Krajsic (2016) highlight that meat-related products such as barbeques, steaks, and meat pies still dominate as elements considered as important in the make-up of typical Australian diet. Human relationships are believed to be 'manifested through the sharing of food, certainly of meat' (Bohm, Lindblom, Åbaka, Bengs, & Hörnell, 2015, p. 101) and any rejection of these traditional ideas may be equated with the dismissal of community values (Fiddes, 2004). This tension helps to explain why vegetarians are sometimes dismissed as strange and threatening (Cole & Morgan, 2011), particularly by meat eaters.

In addition, content being posted online, particularly by activists, may cause meat consumers to begin questioning their rationales about consuming meat. Thus,

it is unsurprising that meat consumers in our research indicated that they ignore activist content, or consider the content to be extreme. Rothgerber (2014) demonstrated that simply reading about vegetarians can result in feelings of guilt and dissonance among meat eaters. This dissonance, also known as the ‘meat paradox’, describes the conflict created between considering the idea that consumption behaviours harm animals and result in their deaths among those who enjoy meat as what they view as part of a healthy diet (Bray, Zambrano, Chur-Hansen, & Ankeny, 2016; Herzog, 2010; Joy, 2010; Piazza et al., 2015). This tension results in the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, which refers to the mechanisms that humans put in place to overcome cognitive discomfort, in this case the ambivalence caused by the idea that an animal had to die for us to consume meat. Joy (2010) describes three principles or categories of justification that meat eaters use to preserve their commitments to eating meat and diffuse any guilt they might experience while consuming animal products, otherwise known as the ‘Three N’s of Justification’. Through socialisation, people come to believe that eating meat is *normal* (how we ought to behave based on our customs and traditions), *natural* (part of human nature and biology), and *necessary* (one cannot live without meat, and nutrients found only in meat are essential for a healthy, balanced diet) (Joy, 2010). Piazza et al. (2015) have also described a fourth N, *nice*, based on the enjoyment that people experience while eating meat. Activism presented online hence may create discomfort amongst meat consumers by disrupting the processes associated with cognitive dissonance, increasing their tendencies to ignore or disregard this type of information.

Activist organisations only share information about extreme cases

Participants questioned the credibility of the information being shared regarding farm animal welfare, suggesting that activists often only focus on the worst cases, including sensationalised cases of abuse, or target those few who are failing to meet welfare standards that are generally widely adopted, as this quote illustrates:

So if I know the source is an...animal welfare or animal liberation or animal activist group such as Animals Australia or PETA...I tend to take it with a grain of salt and [it] tends to make me agitated because I know that the people who they're targeting are...the minority. – Steve, Toowoomba.

In addition, activist organisations themselves were not viewed as reliable sources, due to having reputation for being ‘extreme’, with some activists engaging in serious cases of unlawfulness in promotion of their cause (Mummery, Rodan, Ironside, & Nolton, 2014). Animal activist groups have been known to utilise shocking imagery to generate ‘such a sense of outrage in people they become inclined toward political action’ (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995, p. 498). As will be seen in the quote next, participants in this research project clearly believed that content shared on social media by activist organisations and their supporters is exaggerated:

I often disregard a lot of what I see on Facebook. I think...a lot of the original articles I see are often published or it seems to me that they are published by people who have the worst, worst possible view on it. So I think a lot of it is possibly exaggerated...I just disregard it

because you know I think it is just one really bad case, it's not the way everything is so why should I stop doing what I am doing because one really bad thing is happening? And that's not the standard. Like we're only seeing the worst of the worst.

Visual material, such as footage of animal suffering, aims to generate moral shock and sympathetic responses, with the end goal being political action (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). However, as Mummery et al. (2014) recognise, none of these strategies are fail-safe ways of creating political action. This type of failure may be particularly likely in the context of meat consumption in part due to the reasons discussed in the previous section; in addition, as Mika (2006, p. 932) writes:

[W]hen one is confronted with personal and aggressive attacks condemning meat consumption, it is one's behaviour being condemned: the enemy is thyself... Thus, it could be that moral shock campaigns are ineffective... because condemning meat consumption (as opposed to other violations of animal rights) inevitably forces people to confront their own behaviour (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.

Doubting the credibility of an organisation may also be a product of information selectivity, also known as 'confirmation bias' (Buttlere & Buder, 2017) – the phenomena where people choose to interact or experience information with which they agree, while avoiding information with which they disagree. As noted previously, rejection of activism online by research participants was usually based on the frequent association that it has with vegan or vegetarian diets, which goes against beliefs, attitudes, and values of meat eaters. One's prior beliefs and attitudes 'should anchor the evaluation of new information' (Anderson, 1981, p. 755), and depending on the credibility of the evidence, one's opinion can be adjusted (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Thus, people tend to connect with information with which they agree, and also tend to ignore information with which they disagree (Festinger, 1962; Nickerson, 1998; Praiser, 2011); this was clearly the case amongst our meat-eating participants. Edwards and Smith (1996) also highlight that information with which one disagrees often is considered to be of lower quality and importance. We contend that all these factors result in undermining the credibility of activist organisations regarding social media activity about animal welfare.

Activists and their supporters are ignorant about 'real' farming conditions

Participants believed that content being shared on social media by activists does not represent what happens on farms, and suggested that farmers do not have the opportunities or time to defend the production system. Bella from Adelaide questioned whether people would follow vegetarian or vegan diets if they had the opportunity to experience what happens on farm first-hand:

It's hard because there is [sic] always people that go around and you like post something like that and then the vegans and the vegetarians will come in and go like 'well we don't eat meat and that is why we are against you' and it's just like, I don't know, like would they become vegetarian or vegan if they had known the farmers... if they had known what is actually going on behind the scenes? Like, would a portion of those vegetarians be meat eaters still if they saw what the farmers were doing rather than just looking at social media.

As evidenced by the quote previously, some of the participants' opinions generated in this research align with the much criticised 'deficit model' of knowledge which associates negative attitudes towards particular applications of science and technologies with ignorance resulting from a deficit in knowledge (Sturgis & Allum, 2004). In this case, our participants' commonly proposed solution to counter what they viewed as inaccurate and untrustworthy online content about animal welfare was for scientists and farmers to communicate 'facts' to nonscientists and consumers including activists. As evidenced in the quotes earlier, participants believed that if farmers were more transparent about and explained their methods of production and animal welfare-related practices, activists (and particularly vegans and vegetarians) would not be as critical of these practices (though they might well continue to practice vegan or vegetarian diets). However, relying on the deficit model and simply increasing education and information provision is regarded as a key cause of increasing negative opinions towards the issues in question. Scholarship indicates that science communication attempts which aim at increasing 'knowledge' (and therefore support for an issue or science in general) are ineffective (Hart & Nisbet, 2012). Opinions or judgments about an issue are composed of facts as well as beliefs and values (Ahteensuu, 2012). In the context of food, it may not be the specific production methods about which people have concerns, but rather that the production method in question challenges their core values (in this case vegan or vegetarian diets and lifestyles), so much so that education and information are unlikely to change their opinions and associated activist activities, despite the opinions of our participants. It also is well documented that vegetarians and vegans make considered choices when engaging in their lifestyles and use these to foster change (Cherry, 2015), and therefore are unlikely to engage with farmers or farming.

Animal welfare activism is a form of 'slacktivism'

Some of our participants expressed scepticism about whether social media is an effective medium for activism, using the word 'slacktivism' (Glenn, 2015; Wright, 2016) to describe the sharing of content online:

Let's not confuse activism with like slacktivism. Like posting on Facebook doesn't actually do anything.

'Slacktivism' is a neologism which combines the words 'slacker' and 'activism', and sometimes is described as 'armchair activism'. Although it initially had some positive connotations when it came into vogue in the mid-1990s, the word currently typically is utilised as a derogatory or pejorative term to describe support for an issue or social cause that may make people feel good but has limited practical effects. Many slacktivist activities occur via social media, such as joining an organisation by following it online but not contributing to its activities, as well as signing internet petitions or sharing posts or statuses on Facebook or Twitter. There are considerable doubts about the efficacy of symbolic actions such as liking a Facebook page or sharing a post in relation to social change (Obar, 2014; Penney, 2015). While on the surface these actions seem supportive of a cause, there is concern that these online actions replace traditional forms of activism, such as face-to-face protest, while misleading social media users to believe that these types of engagement lead to effective social change (Brady, Young, & McLeod, 2015).

Slacktivism has become the extent of many people's political involvement, believing they are doing something which will change the world by simply sharing information to their online network, often without any depth of discussion around the topic (Kien, 2013). Participants in our research believed that sharing content on social media was not an effective way to bring about social change, especially in the farm animal welfare space. Animal welfare activists often publish e-petitions thought to be a 'low-bar participatory act' with little or no impact (Wright, 2016). People also turn their social media platforms into 'filter bubbles' (Howard, Savage, Savinga, Toxtli, & Monroy-Hernández, 2016), or create micro-publics (Barbour, Marshall, & Moore, 2014) which reduce the likelihood of exposure to new or opposing ideas. If a user were to share activist-type content, there is a high chance that those already in their network have similar ideas about the issue, and thus they do not influence others to sign up to the cause.

While participants of this research considered online activism to be a form of slacktivism, such forms of activism cannot be completely dismissed as ineffective, as evidenced by examples of highly productive forms of online activism used to complement traditional forms of offline activism. Franklin (2014) argues that slacktivism, defined as actions in support of political or social causes but regarded as requiring little time or involvement, existed long before the internet and is likely to exist long after the popularity of social media platforms diminishes. Franklin also notes that any serious political or social form of action in the current internet era must have an online dimension, which requires expenditure of energy to develop multisited and multiskilled forms of strategy. Mummery and Rodan (2017) argue that while actions such as clicking 'like' or 'share' can look less impressive when compared to the spectacle of offline protests, activists clearly value social media as effective tools to raise public awareness about issues, to show decision-makers that public attitudes are changing, and to reveal that individuals are willing to collaborate to take public action over particular issues. Other studies have shown the importance of online activism: for instance, Steinberg (2016) reported that hashtag activism was attributed to the success of the 2012 student loan debate. In a study exploring the potential power of internet memes, Vie (2014) claims that while intangible, virtual support is still a form of support and can lead to greater offline action over time.

Despite this evidence, there is another important aspect of our participants' complaints about slacktivism. Implicit in our participants' views on activist content about animal welfare provided via social media is their scepticism about those who share activist content and their motivations. There are concerns that the sharing of animal welfare activism online may be part of attempts to create activists' online identities, rather than true attempts to change the opinions or behaviours of those in the users' networks. The generation of a user's network is centred around how users generate and portray their online identities or 'performative selves' (Moore, Barbour, & Lee, 2017). These identities tend to be individualised and lifestyle- and issues-based rather than associated with conventional markers such as class, race, or ethnicity (Dodson & Papoutsaki, 2017). Some users may decide to share or interact with activist content on social media precisely because their values align with the content, but of course those whose values are not aligned are more likely to be sceptical, as in fact were most of our meat-eating participants.

Conclusion

The large amount of ‘traffic’ generated by animal welfare activists on social media has created concern for the Australian livestock industry. The volume of traffic has led consumers to believe that activists have a louder voice than those involved in animal production, as shown in the following quote.

I think it is like you were saying, people aren't coming in and saying 'this is what it's like' like the farmers aren't coming up and showing people ... it is more the welfare people that are speaking louder so everyone is looking at them more.

As previously demonstrated in Buddle, Bray, and Pitchford (2017), and documented in this article, the considerable traffic generated by animal welfare activists online particularly in extreme cases does not necessarily indicate the success of this content in terms of changing the public's views. Content shared by an individual or organisation typically only reaches their micro-publics. While large amounts of traffic may be generated by the sharing of activism to generate change, exposure to the content may be limited to within the relevant micro-publics. In the example of animal welfare activism online, while activists and industry do not share the same values, their online micro-publics interact and overlap as they both hold interests in what the other is doing (Buddle et al., 2017). Although this helps to explain the concerns that industry and farmers have about content being shared online, from the evidence presented in this article, it is evident that social media activism about animal welfare is ignored or ‘taken with a grain of salt’ by meat consumers in this research.

In summary, the meat consumers who participated in this research reported that they generally ignored animal welfare activism on social media. Reasons for this varied, ranging from content being a misrepresentation of what occurs, the association between animal welfare activism and vegetarian or vegan diets or lifestyles, and the belief that activism online is in fact merely slacktivism and hence not morally compelling or meaningful. These findings suggest that although the adoption of social media has changed how issues about animal welfare are mobilised and communicated and may increase the overall amount of communication, these new trends have not altered how content is received, particularly by those whose values do not align with those of the activist organisations and their supporters. Further research is warranted on several topics, for example to assess whether animal welfare activism online is more trusted by those who do not identify strongly as meat eaters and are already questioning their consumption habits, and whether emerging uses of social media (such as lifestyle, wellness, and celebrity blogging) which connect identity to animal welfare concerns are more effective than current strategies. Although many people now receive their information online, they choose their content based on their preexisting beliefs and behaviours and it is filtered in large part by the micro-publics in which they participate. Our study shows that current social media use by activist organisations to promote animal welfare does not appear to be an effective strategy for those who are meat eaters, and may even perpetuate perceptions of lack of shared values between meat eaters and nonmeat eaters.

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Notes on contributors


Emily A. Buddle is a postgraduate student at the University of Adelaide, completing her PhD exploring meat consumer attitudes towards farm animal welfare. Her primary research interests are in agriculture, food and communication.

Heather J. Bray is a senior research associate in the School of Humanities at the University of Adelaide exploring community understandings of, and attitudes to, the role of science and technology in food production.

Rachel A. Ankeny is a professor in the School of Humanities at the University of Adelaide. She is an interdisciplinary teacher and scholar whose areas of expertise cross three fields: history/philosophy of science, bioethics and science policy, and food studies.

ORCID

Emily A. Buddle  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7073-5588>

Heather J. Bray  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9435-8876>

Rachel A. Ankeny  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1547-6031>

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