

## **Abstracts for AELA 2016 Conference**

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### *Abstract:*

#### *'Power, Knowledge and Welfare in Australian Intensive Farm Animal Production'*

The systems of agriculture used in Australia to raise animals for slaughter and human consumption have undergone profound transformation in the past half-century. Traditional mixed agriculture systems that combined crops and multi-species animal production have largely given way to industrialised single-species intensive confinement systems in all of the significant livestock sectors. Proponents claim that intensive farming has led to improvements in productivity, nutrition and disease control, while opponents claim that intensive farming has a detrimental impact on human health, the environment and, most notably, the wellbeing of animals being raised in such systems. This debate has long been characterised as a war between farmers and animal liberationists. One of the primary weapons of war utilised by contemporary animal liberationists in the battle over transparency has been the public release of covert surveillance footage captured in intensive farming facilities. In turn, government and industry condemnation of covert surveillance tactics has led to the birth of a new breed of legislation commonly referred to as 'ag-gag' laws. The term 'ag-gag' describes a variety of anti-whistleblower laws that seek to hinder animal liberationists by criminalising the capture and release of covert surveillance footage. Following the lead of a number of state legislatures in the United States, ag-gag bills have been recently introduced at both a state and federal level in Australia and politicians from both of the major political parties have voiced their support for the introduction of ag-gag legislation. Through application of Michel Foucault's ideas about knowledge, power and discourse, this presentation will explore the ongoing battle of ideologies underlying the rise of ag-gag legislation in Australia. It is hoped that this methodology will contribute to the development of a theoretical context of the politics of truth about animals and encourage a deeper level of reflection on concept of farm animal welfare.

*Keywords:* animal law, animal liberation, ag-gag, intensive farming, michel foucault.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Assistant Professor Jackson Walkden-Brown is an academic and PhD candidate in the Bond University School of Law. His principal area of research and teaching is Animal Law. Having been raised on a farm and surrounded by animals for most of his life, Jackson has had a long-standing interest in animal protection and the natural environment. He has taught Animal Law at Bond University every year since 2008 and regularly presents at animal law conferences. His most recent publications concern animals in entertainment and animal law education. Also a practicing solicitor, Jackson regularly provides legal advice to animal protection advocates and organisations.