

December 7 2016

Consumer Policy Unit  
The Treasury  
Langton Crescent  
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Sirs,

### **FREE RANGE EGG LABELLING INFORMATION STANDARD**

I am a consumer who is very concerned about the need to have robust and appropriate standards relating to free range egg labelling.

It is absolutely vital that such a standard achieves true 'free range'. **As a consumer, I must be able to trust that what I am paying for is what I get.** I am very prepared to pay a premium price for truly Free Range eggs, as are most people who care about animal welfare. We **MUST** be able to trust that the free range conditions and standards applied, are commensurate with our expectations. **This means as close to natural living conditions as is possible; sufficient space to live safely and stress-free; sufficient space to display natural behaviours, etc.** I refer the Consumer Affairs Minister and the Policy Unit to the Animals Australia and RSPCA organisations as appropriate sources to confirm the real definition of Free Range, which meets consumer expectations.

**If the standard cannot guarantee this, then it is a waste of everyone's time and makes a mockery of the entire premise behind having labelling standards in the first place.**

In the proposal, Free Range eggs are defined as "eggs laid by hens who have meaningful and regular access to an outdoor range". This is totally ineffectual as there are not clear definitions stated. The proposed Information Standard also lists five broad exceptions to the requirement to provide 'meaningful and regular access'. I do not accept that such broad opportunities to not meet the standard are appropriate or needed. It is either Free Range, or it is not. Further, these are not defined sufficiently. **So far, you are not meeting your brief, nor are you meeting my expectations.**

Stocking densities of up to **10,000 birds per hectare** are allowed. **This is outrageous, and is completely at odds with the entire principle of Free Range.** What were you thinking when you suggested this was appropriate? Such a loose standard is totally unacceptable and as a consumer, this does not even come close to my expectations.

I also think that the mechanisms by which the proposed Information Standard will be enforced, need to be more comprehensive and clearer.

The above issues and solutions are not rocket science – the govt. should be good at writing standards by now. To have such obvious flaws and opportunities for abuse suggests that either the authors do not understand what free range is, or lobbying by egg producers has negatively influenced policy development, to the severe detriment of a good standard and of course of the animals involved.

Please help to make this standard meaningful, and one that will meet consumer expectations of cruelty-free egg production in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Beth Healy