

Animal activists defy government's 'ag gag' bill with prominent billboard in Melbourne

Makers of the controversial Aussie Farms map and *Dominion* documentary have laid down a public challenge to the government on its decision to bring in 'draconian' federal and state laws.

31 October, 2019: Melbourne

"The government has changed the law to stop you from seeing this. So we put it on a billboard."



This is the message displayed on a prominent billboard on the Westgate Freeway in South Melbourne en route to the city, by animal rights charity [Aussie Farms](#).

Underneath the text is the URL: WATCHDOMINION.COM, urging people to watch the documentary [Dominion](#) – a damning expose of the cruel and violent treatment of animals in factory farms, slaughterhouses, and the fashion and entertainment industries in Australia – which recently surpassed 1 million views.

Dominion, which was made by Aussie Farms' founder Chris Delforce in 2018, hit the headlines in April this year after activists brought the city of Melbourne [to a standstill](#) in protest against animal cruelty.

Shortly after the protests Aussie Farms' controversial [Farm Transparency Map](#) website listing the addresses of intensive animal farms across the country came under renewed attention from the Morrison government, which responded with a federal ['ag gag' bill](#) targeting anyone who publishes footage, information or other material relating to factory farms and slaughterhouses, with jail terms of up to five years.

According to Delforce, the wording of the new legislation is intentionally vague enough that it could be used to imprison anyone who even shares footage of legal, industry-standard practices such as those exposed in *Dominion*, including journalists.

"The clear purpose of this new law is to bolster the secrecy that the animal agriculture industry has always relied on, threatening anyone who would seek to expose it," Delforce says. "It's effectively saying that Australian consumers, who are by and large strongly opposed to animal

cruelty, have no right to know that they're paying for it or to make informed choices, instead demanding that they listen only to the industry's marketing campaigns promising happy animals and 'humane' slaughtering."

Delforce slammed the 'draconian' laws as a serious threat to democracy and potential press freedom. "The Morrison government's attacks on the rights of Australians to be educated about these issues must be challenged, and this industry must be held accountable and made transparent," he says. "We hope this billboard sends a clear message to the industry and its political allies that intimidation and draconian laws will get them nowhere, and a clear message to consumers that they are being lied to."

The billboard was installed on Wednesday 30 October, in a high-traffic area at 60 Moray St, South Melbourne, on the Westgate Freeway in the direction of the city, initially for a period of one month. An additional two digital billboards are planned to run for a week in Carrum Downs and Warrnambool.

[Ends]

About Chris Delforce

Chris Delforce is the founding director of [Aussie Farms](#). He has written and directed two award-winning documentaries relating to the ways animals are used in the Australian economy. *Lucent* (2014) comprehensively explored Australia's pig farming industry, while *Dominion* (2018) gave the same treatment to the broader animal agriculture, clothing, and entertainment industries, using drones, hidden and handheld cameras to expose their dark underbelly, with narration by Joaquin Phoenix, Rooney Mara, Sia, Kat Von D and Sadie Sink. Following the release of *Lucent*, Chris's home was raided by police, leading to Australia's first-ever 'ag-gag' charges for the publication of gas chamber footage from Australia's largest pig slaughterhouse, and related footage from several NSW pig farms. The charges were ultimately dismissed at trial in August 2017. A self-taught web developer, Chris spent more than eight years building the Aussie Farms Repository and [Farm Transparency Map](#) websites, released in late 2017 and early 2019 respectively.

About Aussie Farms Inc

Aussie Farms is an animal rights charity, dedicating to ending commercialised animal abuse and exploitation in Australian animal agriculture facilities by increasing industry transparency and educating the public about modern farming and slaughtering practices. Established in 2014 with the release of [world-first footage of the carbon dioxide gas chambers](#) used in pig slaughterhouses, Aussie Farms grew from separate campaigns that had been run under various Animal Liberation groups including [NSW](#), [ACT](#) and [QLD](#). These campaigns began with [Aussie Pigs](#), and expanded to [Aussie Turkeys](#), [Aussie Ducks](#), [Aussie Eggs](#), [Aussie Chickens](#), [Aussie Rabbits](#) and [Aussie Abattoirs](#). Together these websites formed the Aussie Farms network, aimed at countering the myth that animal abuse doesn't happen in Australia or that when it does happen, it's an isolated incident. The Aussie Farms repository is a public gallery for videos, photos, documents and campaign materials; a knowledgebase; and a centre for innovative and creative tools, relating to the animal rights movement in Australia. [The Farm Transparency Map](#) is a

comprehensive, interactive map of factory farms, slaughterhouses and other animal exploitation facilities across Australia, launched publicly by Aussie Farms in January 2019.

<https://www.aussiefarms.org.au/>

About Dominion

Dominion the documentary uses drones, hidden and handheld cameras to expose the cruelty and violence of modern animal agriculture, questioning the morality and validity of humankind's dominion over the animal kingdom. While mainly focusing on animals used for food, it also explores other ways animals are exploited and abused by humans, including clothing, entertainment and research. It is narrated by Joaquin Phoenix, Rooney Mara, Sia, Sadie Sink and Kat Von D, and co-produced by [Earthlings](#) creator Shaun Monson. *Dominion* was filmed in Australia and has a global message. It is available to watch, free, online at www.watchdominion.com and recently surpassed 1 million views.

MEDIA CONTACT

Chris Delforce of Aussie Farms is available for comment and interviews.

Contact Chris Delforce directly on 0401 763 340 or email chris@aussiefarms.org.au

Images of the billboard artwork, the billboard displayed in situ, and of Chris Delforce are available here: <http://bit.ly/AussieFarmsBillboard>

NOTES TO EDITORS

The federal ag gag bill ([Criminal Code Amendment \(Agricultural Protection\) Bill 2019](#)) was passed by both houses on 12 September, 2019 and received royal assent on 19 September, 2019. To date there have not been any charges laid under this Act.

[NSW Biosecurity Regulations](#) came into effect in early August, meaning anyone who visits a farm that has a biosecurity management plan without complying with that plan could face \$220,000 fines. Also in NSW a [Right to Farm bill](#) with new aggravated trespass definitions and offences has passed the lower house and is before the upper house.

An ag-gag motion [was recently defeated in the Victorian parliament](#). The recent [Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture](#) is due to report back to parliament on 1 February, 2020.