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Submission to the Productivity Commission's Philanthropy Inquiry

Vegan Australia is pleased to have the opportunity to provide a submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into philanthropic giving in Australia and ways to increase charitable giving and reduce obstacles. We hope this submission assists the Commission.

Vegan Australia is a national organisation that informs the public about animal rights and veganism and also presents a strong voice for veganism to government, institutions, corporations and the media. Vegan Australia envisions a world where all animals live free from human use and ownership. The foundation of Vegan Australia is justice and compassion, for animals as well as for people and the planet. The first step each of us should take to put this compassion into action is to become vegan and to encourage others to do the same. Veganism is a rejection of the exploitation involved in commodifying and using sentient beings.

There is currently an inconsistent approach to the definition of charitable organisations in Australia. On the one hand we have the ACNC registering charities using the ACNC criteria and on the other hand we have the ATO allocating DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status according to different criteria, often much stricter than the ACNC's. Vegan Australia would like to see this inconsistency removed by giving DGR status to all charities registered by the ACNC.

One sector where there is a significant difference between the ACNC and DGR definitions of charitable organisations is for charities that advocate on behalf of non-human animals. Many of these charities, such as Vegan Australia, are registered by the ACNC, but under current ATO rules are unable to obtain DGR status. Vegan Australia recommends that this inconsistency be removed.

While charities giving direct assistance to individual animals can obtain DGR status, other organisations that work in the animal welfare sector, such as those that advocate for systemic changes that would assist animals, can not obtain DGR status. This different treatment of animal organisations by the ATO is unfair and should be made more consistent.

The majority of Australians hold the view that non-human animals are legitimate objects of moral concern. Research shows that animal charities are in the top three causes supported by Australian donors. Also, a recent government report found that the vast majority of people are concerned about the well-being of farmed animals, an area of

particular concern to Vegan Australia as well.

The terms of reference of this inquiry state that charities "support vulnerable Australians". While not explicitly stated, Vegan Australia concludes that most Australians would want to include non-human animals amongst these "vulnerable Australians". Therefore, Vegan Australia recommends that charities working in the animal rights and welfare sector should be given equal status to those in other sectors, particularly in terms of access to DGR status.

Charities that work to protect and promote the rights of animals play a crucial role in creating a compassionate and just society, but often face financial challenges. By extending DGR status to these organisations, we can encourage increased philanthropic giving, promote engagement and support from the community, and empower these organisations to effectively advocate for animals.

Vegan Australia believes that gaining DGR status for Vegan Australia would mean a significant increase in donations. While Vegan Australia currently receives donations, these are generally smaller donations from individuals guided by their personal values. Philanthropic organisations would probably be more likely to donate to Vegan Australia if it had DGR status.

Finally, Vegan Australia endorses submissions to the inquiry by other organisations and individuals who also have concerns about the unfairness of the current DGR system as applied to animal charities.

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