

We request Council to object the proposal from Meatworks Australia to build a Sheep and Goat Abattoir in Gillieston, Victoria.

OPPOSITION TO PLANNING APPLICATION NO 2018-218 AND WORKS APPROVAL APPLICATION NO. 1003441. 630 LANCASTER-MOORoopNA RD AND 1100 MULCAHY RD, GILLIESTON



Dear Shepparton Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of local Gillieston community members who are very concerned about the prospect of a new meat processing facility, 'Meatworks Australia' being built in our community. We submitted a letter opposing Meatworks Australia with signatures from 41 local community members in 2018, when Meatworks Australia was first proposed in August 2017. We would like that original letter and signed petition taken into account when deciding on the planning application. I have attached the signatures again to this letter.

There are many concerns regarding the area which has been selected for such a proposal. From the discussion held at the information session it clearly shows that the interest and concerns for neighbouring properties has not been taken into account. Furthermore, the landowners that would be directly affected have not been informed only by way of a newspaper article.

We strongly request Council Members to consider our valid concerns and seriously consider the impact the meat processing facility would have on our local environment, agricultural farmland and community members.

- Firstly, the environmental impact the meat processing facility could have on our environment could be devastating in many ways. Meatworks Australia intend to source sheep and goats from Victorian and interstate farms, this is incredibly concerning as sheep and goats from different areas may **contain infectious diseases** which we don't yet have in Gillieston. Contagious diseases that may be carried on sheep and/or goats include foot rot, flystrike, Ovine Brucellosis, Ovine Johne's disease, Q fever, Scabby Mouth and Lepotspirosis, the last three of which can be transmitted to humans (DEDJTR, 2017). Q fever doesn't usually occur in Victoria, it is more common in Queensland and New South Wales therefore there is a risk of bringing this disease to Victoria (Pretty, 2012). There is also potential for diseases such as Q-Fever to be transmitted along the transport route, therefore having the potential to impact a much larger area.
- In addition **interstate feral seeds, burrs and wild grasses could be carried on sheep and goats' wool, hair, hooves and faeces.** According to Agriculture Victoria, 'weed seeds such as Patterson's curse, Horehound and

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Bathurst burr are just a few of the common noxious weeds carried on sheep that can be spread to new areas, 'once noxious weeds enter, germinate and produce seeds, they are difficult and costly to control' (DEDJTR, 2017). Gillieston is a highly productive vegetable, fruit growing and cropping area and also has several dairies, beef cattle and an equine stud. Therefore it is essential that our agricultural land remains weed free as we try to keep our chemical usage to a minimum. If our land is exposed to additional and new feral weed varieties transported through sheep and goat wool, it would impact our ability to farm through requiring us to purchase and utilise more chemicals and also use additional time and resources to further maintain our farms. This would also be negative on both the farming and nearby natural environment as it would be impacted to more chemical sprays. Also, the feral weeds, burrs and seeds could continue to be spread throughout the area as animals such as birds and wind will spread these around the environment.

- The location of this proposed abattoir is located very closely to nearby farms and farm houses with the closest farm house from the existing dwelling, being only 700 meters away and others are in very close proximity. The proposed abattoir will bring many concerns in addition to pest and disease concerns. These include concerns about **odour, noise, dust and waste disposal**. This is particularly concerning as Meatworks Australia intend to process up to 18,000 animals per week and housing large amounts of animals before processing can cause a whole range of issues. This proposed site might be convenient for the developer but it totally disregards the interests and concerns for neighbouring farming properties.
 - We are alarmed about waste disposal when housing so many livestock and also from the abattoir itself and how this may impact local properties. It is integral that no effluent or waste products are able to drain and contaminate nearby properties.
 - There are many potential sources of odours in abattoir operations including waste effluent treatment plants, livestock transport vehicles, the slaughterhouse, product storage and waste disposal techniques which may produce gases such as methane, ammonia and hydrogen sulphide.
 - Dust can also be emitted from unsealed roads, paddocks, holding pens and construction activities. Furthermore, the facility may be unable to irrigate due to low water allocations during a drought which would result in the paddocks which may be heavily overrun with sheep, being incredibly dusty. This dust could negatively impact the local areas as dust can contaminate fruit, vegetable and other pastures disturbing their growth.
 - Abattoirs can also generate a lot of noise through having animals in concentrated groups, processing activities in the slaughterhouse and plant machinery eg. forklifts, trucks.
- Only 10% of Australia is suitable land for soil based agriculture and livestock production (Sinclair, 1999). As Australia's population increases, more and more farmland is being wasted into industrial and suburban development.

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Gillieston for many years, has been **highly productive agricultural farmland** for fruit, vegetables and dairy and it is essential to Australia's farming future that this fertile farmland is maintained for future food production. Meatworks Australia, is classed as an industrial company and we request that Council does not change regulations allowing them to build industrial facilities on prime farmland and instead encourages this farmland to be used in its most productive manor.

- We are very concerned about the impact a drought would have on Meatworks Australia and we have concerns about water usage in general. At the meeting on the 14th of August, we raised questions about water, regarding access to **water and drainage services, the use of bore water and the impact drought would have on the facility and thereby the land, neighbours and the salt water table** in the area.
 - Meatworks Australia informed us at the meeting that they intend to use bore water, we are concerned how much bore water they will use, how that will impact neighbouring properties who use/may want to use bore water and how that will impact the salt water table.
 - Conversely, we are concerned that water may be allocated to Meatworks Australia during a drought instead of local farmers. We have already previously suffered a financially crippling drought (2001-2009) where water was scarce causing us to loose livestock and for many people their lively hood. It would be very unfair if a new industrial facility was provided water, ahead of local farmers who have managed to remain farming here for many years.
 - Water drainage and waste disposal would need to be very precisely planned and maintained to ensure no effluent, chemicals or other foreign substances enter neighbouring properties or existing drains and channels. We are greatly concerned whether Meatworks Australia would be able to adequately manage water drainage and waste disposal, particularly when housing and processing such high numbers of sheep and goats.
 - Additionally, if we have a very wet season, water may not drain well at the facility causing water to become stagnate. These are issues that need to be seriously considered and addressed in terms of their potential impact on the environment and local farmland.
- Meatworks Australia were unable to inform us how many sheep and goats would be on the land at one time. This is important because holding a large number, such as 18,000 sheep and goats on farmland can have **detrimental impacts on the soil nutrient composition, root systems and groundwater**. Sheep urine has been shown to increase soil pH and the soil solution concentration and can be toxic to roots. Urea in soil also quickly hydrolysed (broken down) which can pollute the groundwater. In addition, if

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sheep have been fed or medicated with antibiotics, copper, zinc anthelmintic or other veterinary treatments, these chemicals can also enter the soil and accumulate over time (Whitmore).

- Meatworks Australia, intend on processing up to 3000 sheep or goats per day. Carting that many animals in trucks to and from the facility would cause the **roads to become busier with heavy trucks and thereby the roads would certainly be negatively impacted** through their use. Furthermore the heavy trucks are likely to use country roads that are already dangerous hotspots. Echuca Road for example, is notorious for having road accidents. In fact, we believe there has been at least two fatalities on Echuca Road since October last year and many more accidents. The nearby roads were not designed for such heavy use and the local community would be negatively impacted through road congestion, damaged roads and the potential for even more road accidents on already dangerous roads.
- We are also apprehensive regarding the **longevity of this industry**. There have been other local abattoirs which have had to close down due to reasons such as decreased access to livestock and high running costs. If Meatworks Australia also decides to close its business, this will be an eye sore for the area there is no way of converting the area back to farm land operation.

Whilst Meatworks Australia would be beneficial in terms of employing 120 employees and using tradesman to build the facility, Gillieston already employs many people through working on the local farms, milking cows and fruit and vegetable pickers/growers. We are very concerned that all of our points listed above could impact our ability to run productive farms and therefore our ability to hire employees.

We ask you to please seriously consider our concerns listed above in regards to Meatworks Australia. We have discussed these concerns with our local neighbours who are also very alarmed about the impact of Meatworks Australia and support us in writing this letter.

Thank you very much for your time,

Yours sincerely,



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References

A.P. Whitmore. *Impact of Livestock on Soil*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://agriculture.de/acms1/conf6/ws4lives.htm>. [Accessed 26 September 2017].

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, State Government of Victoria (DEDJTR). (2017). Biosecurity for Sheep Producers [ONLINE] Available at <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/sheep/biosecurity-for-sheep-producers> [Accessed 15 September, 2017].

Sinclair, I. W. (1999, 19-23 March). *Is there a Future for Australia's Agricultural Land?* Paper presented at the RAPI National Congress, Darwin, Australia. [ONLINE] Available at <http://www.ruralplanning.com.au/library/papers/rapinat99.pdf> [Accessed 15 September 2017]

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