

## A BLOODY BUSINESS

**Killing animals has a high price, on both ends of the knife.**

### Background

Slaughterhouses are neither healthy nor safe. Compared to the general Australian population, meat-workers have an increased risk of death from all causes and a high prevalence of self-reported poor psychological and physical health. Slaughterhouses are inherently hazardous work-places that pose tangible physical risks and psychological harms to workers<sup>1</sup>.

*"Animals come here to die, to be eviscerated, to be decapitated... these are violent and difficult things to watch. It is essentially very dehumanising work"* (Bill Haw, CEO of National Farms, USA<sup>2</sup>). One of the inherent problems may be that employees must violate the innate tendency to refrain from killing and dismembering someone. By repeatedly violating one's natural preference not to harm and kill, workers are highly likely to experience adverse psychological effects. Slaughterhouse workers suffer from anxiety, panic, depression, increased paranoia, a sense of disintegration, and drug and alcohol abuse. When people are required to work in an environment where they habitually enact relationships of domination and exploitation, where they must desensitise themselves to the suffering of animals, it becomes easier to reproduce these outside of their work<sup>3</sup>. The "Sinclair Effect," is the propensity for those who routinely slaughter animals, to become perpetrators of violent crimes. Killing animals may be a first step to further forms of violence against humans<sup>4</sup>.

Research shows that slaughterhouse workers demonstrate signs and symptoms of Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress (PITS), sometimes through the psychological dissociation called "doubling"<sup>5</sup> also experienced by Nazi doctors. PITS is a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that results from situations that would be traumatic if someone were a victim, but where the person in question has been a perpetrator. "Doubling" is a situation whereupon the worker identifies with the animals, feeling that they are worthy of consideration and care. However, in order to keep killing and

dismembering them, the workers must dissociate from this kind-heartedness, resulting in a chronic suppression of empathy.

*"Down in the blood pit they say that the smell of blood makes you aggressive. And it does. You get an attitude that if that hog kicks at me, I'm going to get even. You're already going to kill the hog, but that's not enough. It has to suffer. When you get a live one you think, oh good I'm going to beat this sucker... And then it gets to a point where you're at a day-dream stage. Where you can think about everything else and still do your job. You become emotionally dead."*<sup>6</sup>

Aside from the brutality to the animals in the slaughterhouse, there is an added risk that this pathology will spill over into their domestic lives, making them more likely to commit violent crimes, particularly against those who are similarly defenceless, such as women and children.

At a time when interpersonal and social violence is a grave concern, we recognise that there are significant risks in employing men (overwhelmingly) to kill and dismember as a matter of routine. There is evidence that the psychological harm experienced by men who are paid to do this loathsome work, spills over into the rest of their lives<sup>7</sup>. We are also aware that automated killing is being trialled in some slaughterhouses. While we do not want our friends, relatives or partners to work in these jobs, neither do we want to live in a society where slaughterhouses are fully automated. This would make animal suffering even easier to put out of mind. Instead, we will continue to advocate for the closing of all slaughterhouses.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4841092/pdf/QHW-11-30266.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/meat/slaughter/slaughterhouse.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-playing-field/201005/is-your-brain-slaughter>

<sup>4</sup><https://yaleglobalhealthreview.com/2016/01/25/a-call-to-action-psychological-harm-in-slaughterhouse-workers/>

<sup>5</sup><https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/38193>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-playing-field/201005/is-your-brain-slaughter>

<sup>7</sup>[http://www.animalstudies.msu.edu/Slaughterhouses\\_and\\_Increased\\_Crime\\_Rates.pdf](http://www.animalstudies.msu.edu/Slaughterhouses_and_Increased_Crime_Rates.pdf)



Want a voice for animals in Parliament? Join, donate, or find out more about the Animal Justice Party at [animaljusticeparty.org](http://animaljusticeparty.org). You can also read our policies, here: [animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist](http://animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist).

Authorised by: Geoff Russell, 6 Fifth Ave, St Morris SA 5068



*A hammer in an Australian slaughterhouse is used as a backup killing method*

Work in slaughterhouses lends itself to worker exploitation. In Germany the meat industry<sup>8</sup> is under the spotlight for low wages and conditions built on the back of cheap migrant labour. Slaughterhouses in Australia<sup>9</sup> the UK<sup>10</sup>, and Canada<sup>11</sup> have chronic shortages of workers prepared to kill animals. It's one thing to buy meat in plastic packaging from supermarkets, but quite another to be in the front line doing the killing.

Another type of work that can seriously affect humans as well as animals is keeping animals used for research purposes. The animals are normally killed at the conclusion of the research which affects both them and animal house workers who may have formed bonds with them.

## Policy

The emerging literature on the psychological effects of slaughterhouse work on humans is substantive<sup>12</sup>. We already know that farming animals for food is harmful to animals, the environment and human health. Now we are seeing that the animal industries may cause wider harms. The desensitisation to suffering is causally linked to a higher propensity for committing violent crimes, particularly domestic abuse, which is a great concern to Australians. An industry that institutionalises and normalises violence makes

an ethical system within it impossible to apply. Therefore, we believe the majority of the industry is beyond reform and detrimental to those who work within and pass through it. Due to the multiple harms caused by the slaughterhouse industry, we recommend closing it down and transitioning workers to kinder, meaningful employment.

## Key Objectives

1. To establish a Federal Government inquiry into the connection between slaughterhouse work and family and social violence
2. To ensure that workers compensation schemes cater for the unique physical and psychological risks faced by slaughterhouse workers
3. To conduct regular psychological examinations of workers for signs of stress and psychological harm that could raise the risk of family or social violence
4. To provide assistance to enable animal farmers and slaughterhouse workers to transition to plant based industries.

## Justice in the Work Place

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) has four core values: Kindness, Equality, Rationality and Non-violence. These determine how the AJP will protect the rights of Australian workers. Broadly, we seek to promote the personal freedom, wellbeing and security of all humans and other animals. The AJP opposes all forms of exploitation and therefore supports employment conditions that respect workers for their humanity and not merely their productive output. We also recognise the value of workplace unions and the need to provide Australians with meaningful work and financial security.

The AJP believes that the economy must be restructured in accordance with our key principles. We will promote workers' rights and environmental protection over short-term corporate profits. Furthermore, many of the AJP's goals for animals and the environment will be more achievable when our human population is itself free from exploitation.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.ft.com/content/obbb1754-6812-11e3-8ada-00144feabdco>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.theland.com.au/story/5420550/abattoir-jobs-galore-but-new-workers-are-few/>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/19/christmas-crisis-kill-dinner-work-abattoir-industry-psychological-physical-damage>

<sup>11</sup><http://www.nwawjc.org/news/2016/2/4/slaughterhouse-work-is-so-horrible-canada-cant-find-anyone-to-do-it>

<sup>12</sup>Gullone, Eleonora (2012), "Animal Cruelty, Antisocial Behaviour, and Aggression: More than a Link" Palgrave Macmillan. Flynn, Clifton P. (2012) Understanding Animal Abuse: A Sociological Analysis" New York: Lantern Books. Eisnitz, Gail A. (2009) Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, And Inhumane Treatment"



Want a voice for animals in Parliament? Join, donate, or find out more about the Animal Justice Party at [animaljusticeparty.org](http://animaljusticeparty.org). You can also read our policies, here: [animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist](http://animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist).

Authorised by: Geoff Russell, 6 Fifth Ave, St Morris SA 5068