



# DISCOVER DAIRY

## OPPOSITION GUIDE

# WHAT THEY DON'T TEACH KIDS IN SCHOOL

Dairy Australia is the national peak body for Australian dairy, dedicated to supporting the profitability and sustainability of dairy farming, from farm to product. Their stated goal is "shaping a profitable and sustainable dairy industry by providing services that benefit and advance dairy farm business and the industry."

Currently, Dairy Australia is allowed open access to our education institutions through its Discover Dairy curriculum. These materials, provided for free on Dairy Australia's website, encourage schools to teach children about the dairy industry, using videos, worksheets, activities and information created by Dairy Australia. Unsurprisingly, these materials fail to mention any of the dairy industry's less than appetising elements, including the separation of calves from their mothers, the mass slaughter of male bobby calves and the slaughter of dairy cows at a fraction of their natural lifespan. The presence of such clearly biased, inaccurate and misleading content in our schools is a true disgrace and a complete betrayal of our education system, and of our students.

Dairy Australia is deceiving and manipulating children through their Discover Dairy educational resources. We're calling on state education ministers to support the end of deceptive curriculum which supports industry profits, not educational outcomes.

Discover Dairy provides lesson plans and resources for students from grade prep up to year 10. Most of the resources are focused at younger year levels, with the majority aimed at students from foundation levels to grade 6.



## Participating States

The picasso cow program allows us to confirm that the Discover Dairy curriculum is actively being used by schools in the following states and territories:

- Victoria
- New South Wales
- South Australia
- Queensland
- Western Australia
- Northern Territory
- Tasmania

# BIASED REPRESENTATION OF THE DAIRY INDUSTRY

As an industry representative organisation, the resources created by Dairy Australia are inherently biased towards representing the Australian dairy industry in a positive light and encouraging students to a) consume dairy products and b) consider a career in the dairy industry. As such, all resources provided in the Discover Dairy Program are framed from the perspective that dairy is an industry without any real issues and which adds incredible value to farmers, producers and consumers.

The current Australian curriculum includes a stated goal of 'improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system.' It also claims to 'represent what the Australian community values as the knowledge, understanding and skills that young people should attain.' Additionally, it lists 'ethical understanding' as a general capability that the curriculum is designed to develop in students. Despite this, Dairy Australia has been allowed to create resources that have no independent review and no balance of perspectives. The Discover Dairy program is operating as free advertising for the Australian dairy industry, by allowing information and messaging that encourages ongoing support for dairy farming and production, unfiltered access to the most vulnerable members of society.

## MISLEADING INFORMATION AND OBSCURING INFORMATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Undoubtedly due to the biased nature of its development, the Discover Dairy curriculum includes misleading and out of context information, designed to present a positive view of the industry to young people. It also obscures many practices that are essential to the production of dairy as well as key information regarding the health and sustainability of dairy products. The misinformation and deception can be separated into three elements: animals, health and environment.



# ANIMALS

The Discover Dairy curriculum involves a virtual reality farm tour, lesson plans, videos and activities for students of different ages. In multiple resources, dairy cows are discussed, with the program covering areas such as caring for cows, how milk is made and information about dairy cows. The program includes information on the first cows to arrive in Australia, the most common dairy cow breeds, the different types of milking sheds and the bottle-feeding of calves, alongside other similar information such as what cows eat to produce milk, what a dairy farm looks like and how the health of cows is maintained.

However, resources are designed in such a way to gloss over or neglect to include elements that the dairy industry would prefer not to be public knowledge - including practices which are performed on almost all Australian dairy farms, and are essential to the industry's ongoing existence and profitability.

## **Forced impregnation**

One area that is distinctly lacking from the resources provided to schools is details regarding the prevalence of artificial insemination in dairy herds. In their video resource, Everything you need to know about dairy, which is included in lesson plans for older students, they state that "cows start to produce milk when they have their first calf... usually at around two years of age," and that "a standard Australian dairy herd consists of cows... heifers... bulls... calves." The language of a cow beginning to produce milk when her first calf is born, at around two years of age, is echoed in resources for younger children.

At no point do they include information regarding forced impregnation and artificial insemination, a severe omission considering that Dairy Australia's Program Manager of Animal Health and Fertility, Dr Kathryn Davis, was quoted in 2015 saying that "85% of Australian dairies use artificial insemination to some extent." The numbers today are likely much higher.

While insemination and fertility could potentially be considered unnecessary content for some age groups, its omission from resources for students in secondary school indicates that the lack of inclusion of information regarding dairy breeding programs is an intentional and

targeted attempt to obscure this information from the public. Artificial insemination and forced impregnation are integral parts of the modern dairy industry. They are also areas where the dairy industry faces opposition, with practices such as the commercial harvesting of semen from bulls, most commonly through electro-ejaculation, and the forced insemination of female cows, being strongly opposed by many animal rights and welfare groups. It is also our belief that many members of the public would be opposed to or uncertain about these practices, if they were presented with the reality of breeding in the dairy industry.





### **Calf Separation**

Another serious omission is the trauma associated with the separation of calves from their mothers, which is done on almost every dairy farm in Australia. In this video, which is available as a resource for students in primary school and high school, it is mentioned that “calves are separated from their mothers within 12 hours and moved to a warm, dry shed,” however, it is also stated that mother cows make milks for their calves and that “farmers then milk the cow to provide milk for us too,” indicating that calves have access to milk from their mothers.

Missing from the materials entirely is any discussion or reflection on the ethics of removing calves from their mothers after only 12 hours, as well as the distressing reality of calf separation, including how mother cows grieve for their babies and are often observed chasing after trailers full of calves or attempting to hide their newborns from the farmer.

What is also missing is the neglect and cruelty shown to any male or surplus female calves, who are sent to slaughter within a week of their birth. These ‘bobby’ calves are generally fed minimally and with low-quality milk replacement to keep costs down. They are then transported to a saleyard or directly to a slaughterhouse where they are killed and sold for veal and, often, for their skins. Many calves have been photographed and filmed in the holding pens of slaughterhouses with protruding ribs and visible signs of illness, while some are too weak to stand or cry out. No food is provided for bobby calves while they are transported to slaughter, a journey which can take many hours, or while they are held at the slaughterhouse. Calves are usually held overnight, however, occasionally they may be held over the weekend.

## Bobby calf slaughter

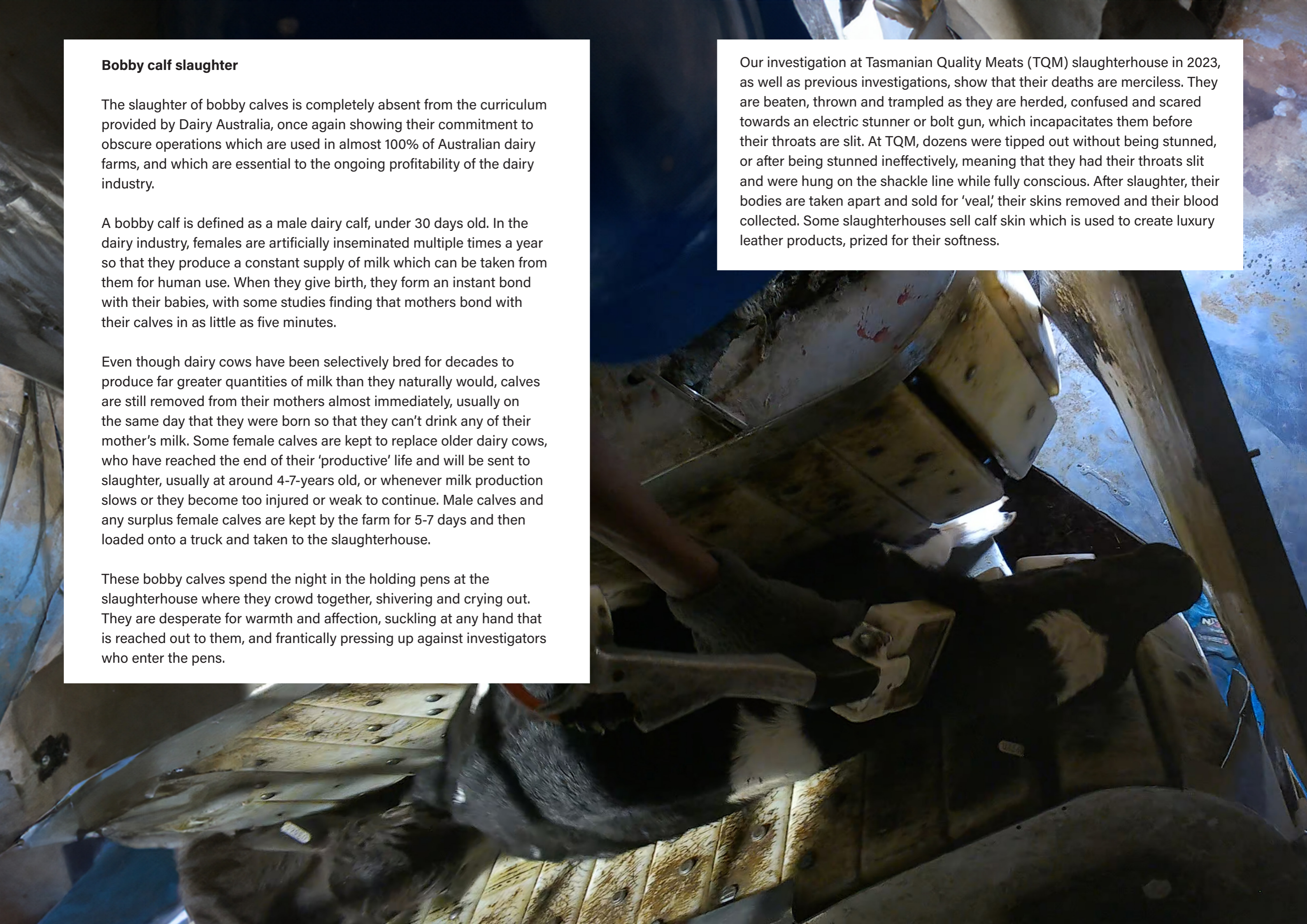
The slaughter of bobby calves is completely absent from the curriculum provided by Dairy Australia, once again showing their commitment to obscure operations which are used in almost 100% of Australian dairy farms, and which are essential to the ongoing profitability of the dairy industry.

A bobby calf is defined as a male dairy calf, under 30 days old. In the dairy industry, females are artificially inseminated multiple times a year so that they produce a constant supply of milk which can be taken from them for human use. When they give birth, they form an instant bond with their babies, with some studies finding that mothers bond with their calves in as little as five minutes.

Even though dairy cows have been selectively bred for decades to produce far greater quantities of milk than they naturally would, calves are still removed from their mothers almost immediately, usually on the same day that they were born so that they can't drink any of their mother's milk. Some female calves are kept to replace older dairy cows, who have reached the end of their 'productive' life and will be sent to slaughter, usually at around 4-7-years old, or whenever milk production slows or they become too injured or weak to continue. Male calves and any surplus female calves are kept by the farm for 5-7 days and then loaded onto a truck and taken to the slaughterhouse.

These bobby calves spend the night in the holding pens at the slaughterhouse where they crowd together, shivering and crying out. They are desperate for warmth and affection, suckling at any hand that is reached out to them, and frantically pressing up against investigators who enter the pens.

Our investigation at Tasmanian Quality Meats (TQM) slaughterhouse in 2023, as well as previous investigations, show that their deaths are merciless. They are beaten, thrown and trampled as they are herded, confused and scared towards an electric stunner or bolt gun, which incapacitates them before their throats are slit. At TQM, dozens were tipped out without being stunned, or after being stunned ineffectively, meaning that they had their throats slit and were hung on the shackle line while fully conscious. After slaughter, their bodies are taken apart and sold for 'veal,' their skins removed and their blood collected. Some slaughterhouses sell calf skin which is used to create luxury leather products, prized for their softness.



### **Spent dairy cow slaughter**

Similar to the absence of information regarding the slaughter of bobby calves, the Discover Dairy curriculum avoids mention of the greatly reduced lifespan of mother cows in the dairy industry. Again, while much attention is paid to common dairy cow breeds, milking shed designs and the biology of how cows turn grass into milk, there is no mention of the age where a dairy cow's productivity for a farm ends and they are sent to slaughter. Although it is communicated that dairy cows usually begin to produce milk at around 2 years of age, there is no information provided about the end of a dairy cow's milk producing life, which in most dairy farms is around four years old.

Once a cow's milk production begins to slow, she is unable to be reimpregnated or she becomes ill or injured, she is sent to slaughter. In Australia, many slaughterhouses specialise in the slaughter of spent dairy cows, generally selling their bodies as cheap meat for export or domestic sale. Greenham's is the largest company specialising in the slaughter and processing of Australian dairy cows. They export meat to multiple countries and supply to Burger King in the US.

Other Australian slaughterhouses also kill dairy cows alongside 'beef' cattle.

### **Dairy beef slaughter**

While some dairy farms proudly boast that they don't slaughter young 'bobby' calves, they gloss over the practice of raising male dairy steers and selling them as 'veal' or 'beef'. Veal calves are less than 12 months, while 'beef' cows are usually killed between 12 and 18 months. Footage of older, male dairy cows has been captured at multiple Australian slaughterhouses, including Wal's Bulk Meats and the Local Meat Co, two of the five Tasmanian slaughterhouses we exposed for shocking animal abuse and breaches of state and national legislation.

During times when beef prices are high, the number of bobby calves slaughtered decreases, however this does not mean that cows are allowed to continue living. Even so-called 'ethical dairies' such as Victorian based How Now Dairy, which proudly states that its cows are allowed to live with "no separation and no slaughter," sell their cows to slaughterhouses or saleyards as beef.





### **Common illnesses**

While the Discover Dairy curriculum has resources specifically related to caring for cows, it fails to include any information about common illnesses and injuries that affect dairy cows.

Cows are generally milked twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening, however some herds are milked up to 3 times a day. Milking today is done by hooking cows up to an industrial machine in a milking parlour/shed.

It is estimated that up to one third of dairy cows suffer from mastitis, a painful inflammation of the mammary glands caused by bacteria entering the teat and moving into the udder. Contaminated equipment can quickly spread mastitis throughout a herd. Mastitis causes the udder to be swollen, hot, and sometimes gangrenous and blackened. Cows can become extremely unwell, miserable, and even die. Milk produced by cows with mastitis is abnormal and can contain increased levels of blood and pus.

22% of dairy cows also suffer from lameness, meaning that walking and moving is difficult and painful. Lameness is the third most common cause of premature slaughter for dairy cows.

The absence of information regarding the prevalence of illness and injury in dairy herds in any of Dairy Australia's resources, even those which refer specifically to veterinary treatment and care for cows, once again indicates a deliberate attempt at deception. Resources which are allowed in schools should be factual, balanced and aligned with Australian curriculum and values, not biased and filled with deliberate manipulations of the truth in order to better serve corporate interests.



# HEALTH

Many of the resources provided in the Discover Dairy program refer to significant health benefits attributable to dairy products, especially for young children. Activities and worksheets refer to the necessity of nutrients found in dairy, such as calcium. In the video, Everything you need to know about dairy, it is stated that "most Australian kids aren't eating enough from the dairy food group to meet their recommended serves." The video finishes with the direction, "don't forget to enjoy dairy every day."

What isn't mentioned is that around 4% of the Australian population and 60% of the global population suffer from lactose intolerance, with 84% of Aboriginal Australians unable to digest lactose. Resources also fail to mention that what is labelled as the 'dairy food group,' by dairy Australia is actually referred to as the milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives group, and includes non-dairy options which are high in calcium.

Dairy products have also been linked to heart disease, type two diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and some types of cancer. Research, including multiple meta analyses and studies funded by the National Cancer Institute, the National Institutes of Health, and the World Cancer Research Fund found that dairy consumption increased the risk of breast cancer and prostate cancer.

# ENVIRONMENT

The Discover Dairy program also includes references to the environmental sustainability of dairy farming, stating in video resources that "today's farmers... are continuing to adopt new sustainable practices to prevent further harm and repair the damage caused by previous practices," and that dairy farmers are constantly finding new, environmentally sustainable ways to manage their farms, animals and businesses."

Cattle manure emits methane, a greenhouse gas estimated to be roughly 30 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> as a heat-trapping gas. The warming potential of methane is 25 times greater than that of CO<sub>2</sub>, meaning 1 tonne of methane is the equivalent of 25 tonnes of carbon dioxide. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation reported that the livestock sector produces more greenhouse gas emissions than the entire transport sector. The dairy industry alone is producing 12% of Australia's total GHG emissions.

10% of Australian water use is attributed to the dairy industry. It takes a massive 1,020 litres of water to produce just 1 litre of milk.

Additionally, like other forms of animal farming, clearing land to graze dairy cows is responsible for large amounts of deforestation, destroying habitats and ecosystems, and hastening the effects of global warming. It is estimated that 79% of deforestation in Australia is caused by clearing land to raise livestock. In contrast, crop agriculture accounts for only 4% of land clearing.



# HOW TO TAKE ACTION

Dairy Australia's Discover Dairy Program is industry advertising disguised as an educational resource. By allowing it in schools, we are accepting that it is ok to educate children using biased, manipulated information which erases and rewrites the reality of an industry that relies on the loyalty of children to ensure its future profitability. Just like we wouldn't allow the confectionary industry to provide resources talking about the benefits of their products, and failing to mention the many and significant drawbacks, we should oppose the shameless manipulation of schoolchildren through this program.

We encourage you to use this resource to write to your state's Education Minister and demand an immediate end to Dairy Australia's manipulation and misinformation of schoolchildren through their Discover Dairy curriculum.

You can use the take action form on our website or email your minister using the contact details below.

If you are a parent, teacher or student, we also encourage you to contact your school to ask if they use the Discover Dairy program, and request that it be banned and replaced with an informative, unbiased curriculum about the reality of our food system.

## State Education Ministers

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Watch the footage and learn more at  
[EndDairySlaughter.com.au](http://EndDairySlaughter.com.au)

