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**Dairy farmers support push for tougher penalties to curb farm invasions**

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**For Immediate Release**

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PEAK dairy farmer group Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) has joined the call for stronger criminal penalties for animal activists, after new legislation was today introduced to the House of Representatives to crack down on incidences of farm trespass.

The *Criminal Code Amendment (Agricultural Protection) Bill 2019* introduces new offences for the incitement of trespass, property damage, or theft on agricultural land, with penalties of up to five years' jail time.

ADF President Terry Richardson said stronger penalties for trespass would provide the best protection for farmers.

"These extremists must be sent a strong message that their behaviour will not be tolerated," he said.

"We hope that the Bill gains the full support of the parliament so that farmers are provided with adequate protections against activists."

In introducing the bill, Attorney-General Christian Porter said, "There must be consequences for this unacceptable behaviour. Farmers should not be subjected to the illegal invasion of their property and privacy."

The current penalties for trespass offences vary between states, with New South Wales imposing a maximum fine of just \$1,100 for breaches under section 4 of the *Inclosed Lands Protections Act 1901*, while in Western Australia, section 70 of the *Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913* offers a maximum penalty of 12 months' jail time and a \$12,000 fine.

ADF's Mr Richardson blasted the tactics of animal rights groups as a "disgraceful act of intimidation" after nationwide protests by activists earlier this year fuelled fear among Australia's farming community.

"Farmers are just trying to do a job, just like everyone else, and they deserve the freedom to do run their businesses without harassment or intimidation," he said.

"Australia has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world, and our farmers care enormously for their animals.

"State and federal governments need to act now to preserve the peace and ensure regional communities are protected."

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