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Submission on Corowa Grower Farm (SSD-93652960)

To: Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Attention: Belinda Kennewell, Contact Planner
State Significant Development assessment

Vegan Australia opposes the proposed Corowa Grower Farm development and asks that development consent be refused. We understand that the formal exhibition period has closed and provide this submission as late or supplementary correspondence for consideration during the assessment of the proposal.

Vegan Australia is a national organisation advocating for veganism and recognition of the fundamental rights of all animals. We envision a world in which our fellow animals live free from human use and ownership. Our objection to this proposal is not that pigs should be used differently or housed under different conditions. It follows from the broader principle that sentient animals should not be bred, owned, confined and killed for human purposes.

The lives of individual pigs matter

Pigs are sentient mammals with complex cognitive, emotional and social capacities [1, 2]. Each pig affected by this development is an individual with their own experiences and interests, including an interest in continuing to live, maintaining bodily integrity and exercising meaningful control over their own life. Treating these individuals as production units does not recognise those interests.

Planning and industry documents routinely describe pigs in aggregate and production-oriented terms such as ‘livestock’, ‘stock’, ‘herd’, ‘capacity’, ‘throughput’ and ‘grower’ or ‘market’ animals. Those terms can obscure the individual pigs affected. The proposal would authorise infrastructure designed around the confinement and eventual killing of very large numbers of pigs over the life of the development.

Animal welfare standards do not resolve this issue. Welfare regulation concerns the conditions under which animals may be used. It does not answer the more fundamental question of whether humans are entitled to use sentient individuals as resources in the first place. For this reason, our objection would not be addressed by changes to housing specifications, stocking densities or other conditions of confinement.

The proposal would expand and entrench animal use

The Environmental Impact Statement describes 31 new ‘grower sheds’, where pigs would be confined and raised until they are killed at the stage considered most profitable for the

producer. The 31 new sheds would be able to hold up to 148,800 pigs at one time. If the development proceeds, the entire Corowa site would then be able to confine up to 312,000 pigs at one time [3]. The proposal therefore goes beyond maintaining an existing operation. It would authorise substantial new infrastructure intended to expand and continue the large-scale use of pigs for food production.

Long-lived infrastructure shapes future production systems. Approving major new infrastructure for animal use would help lock in a system that depends on breeding, confining, transporting and killing animals for years or decades to come. Planning decisions should instead support a transition towards food and agricultural systems that do not depend on animal use.

This is not an objection to one species or one company. The same principle applies to animal agriculture generally. Recognising the rights of animals means opposing not only particular facilities, but the underlying institution of animal use. The Corowa proposal is significant because it is a concrete decision about whether that institution should be expanded further.

Cumulative development should be considered

The Corowa project material identifies related JBS proposals involving the large-scale confinement and use of pigs at Lowesdale, Rennie, Coreen and Mulwala [3, 4]. These developments should not be considered merely as isolated sites. Together they represent a broader regional expansion and restructuring of the commercial use of pigs.

The Department should consider the cumulative consequences of these connected developments, including environmental, water, waste, traffic, biosecurity and amenity impacts. It should also consider their combined effect in committing land, capital and infrastructure to continued large-scale use of animals for food production.

The public interest is not confined to whether the operational impacts of each individual site can be managed. It also includes the direction of future development. Expanding infrastructure whose purpose is the systematic use and killing of sentient animals is not an appropriate direction for a future food system.

Animal welfare mitigation is not an adequate response

Many planning objections to intensive animal agriculture focus on whether particular harms can be reduced through improved management or conditions. Those matters may be relevant to the Department's statutory assessment, but they do not address the central objection to expanding a system in which pigs are bred, confined and killed for human use.

A development can comply with prescribed welfare requirements and still depend fundamentally on treating animals as property and production resources. Likewise, reducing particular forms of suffering does not justify breeding animals for a system in which their bodies and lives are controlled for human purposes and they are ultimately killed.

The appropriate response is therefore not to redesign the proposed piggery so that exploitation occurs under different conditions. It is to refuse further expansion and begin now supporting a transition away from animal agriculture.

Recommendations

1. Refuse development consent for Corowa Grower Farm (SSD-93652960).

2. In assessing the public interest, recognise that pigs are sentient individuals whose lives and interests are affected by the proposal, not merely numbers within production and capacity calculations.

3. Assess the Corowa proposal together with the related JBS developments at Lowesdale, Rennie, Coreen and Mulwala, including their cumulative environmental, infrastructure and regional impacts.

4. Do not treat compliance with animal welfare standards or modifications to confinement conditions as resolving the ethical issue raised by expansion of animal use.

5. Support policy and planning approaches that facilitate a just transition from animal agriculture towards food production systems that do not depend on breeding, confining and killing animals.

Conclusion

Vegan Australia asks the Department to refuse consent for SSD-93652960. Our objection is not that this particular piggery should operate differently. It is that expanding infrastructure for breeding, confining and killing sentient animals perpetuates their treatment as resources for human use.

The same principle informs our position on animal agriculture generally. A future food system consistent with respect for animals' rights would not seek progressively different ways of exploiting animals, but would move away from their use altogether. Approval of substantial new infrastructure for confining and exploiting animals moves in the opposite direction.

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References

[1] Ede, T and Parsons, T D (2023), “Cognitive tasks as measures of pig welfare: a systematic review”, Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 10, 1251070. https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2023.1251070

[2] New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness (2024). https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/nydeclaration

[3] PSA Consulting for JBS Pork Australia Pty Ltd (2026), Corowa Grower Farm Environmental Impact Statement, SSD-93652960, 4 September 2026.

[4] NSW Planning Portal, Corowa Grower Farm (SSD-93652960). https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/corowa-grower-farm