

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALSAnthony Albanese
Prime Minister of Australia**06 October 2023**

Dear Prime Minister:

I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to request your leadership in implementing federal legislation which prohibits exposing children to hunting activities in accordance with new guidance from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. While we realise that hunting activities are overseen at a state and territory level, Australia has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at a federal level, so it is a federal responsibility to ensure the nation fulfils its obligations under the convention to protect children.

As you may know, the committee's General Comment No 26 states, "Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals." Watching wildlife being terrorised, gunned down, or otherwise slaughtered is inarguably traumatic and can be psychologically scarring for young people, most of whom have a natural empathy for animals.

The animals whose lives are taken "for sport" have the same capacity to suffer and feel pain as the dogs and cats we share our homes with, indeed as you and I do. Yet, Australian children as young as 11 are allowed to shoot and kill animals. As the hunting industry welcomes amateurs and there is no law requiring that shooters demonstrate either competency or accuracy, many animals suffer protracted, painful deaths. In Victoria, an estimated one in four birds shot during duck-hunting season are left to suffer, sometimes not succumbing to their injuries until days later.

Witnessing such violence can have a profoundly negative impact on a child's mental wellbeing. While most children are likely to be upset and saddened, some may determine that it is acceptable – even enjoyable – to inflict pain and torment on others and start to believe that life is not valuable. They may then begin abusing animals and bullying weaker peers. This is especially concerning when you consider that sociological studies have determined that violent and aggressive criminals invariably started out when young by abusing animals.

To help young people thrive, it is essential that we take measures to protect them from witnessing acts of casual violence against animals. May we please hear that you will follow the UN committee's guidance and ban minors from engaging in hunting activities?

Yours faithfully,

Emily Rice
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