

PETA attack angers industry

Radical animal activist group PETA has attacked the idea of re-introducing free milk to school children, and compared a milk distribution program to encouraging people to smoke cigarettes.

Advocacy group Dairy Connect has responded to a recent media statement by People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Australian spokesperson Desmond Bellamy, which it said was designed to mislead.

Dairy Connect chief executive officer Shaughn Morgan said the PETA Australia statement contained exaggerations and mistruths and was, in many ways, offensive to dairy farmers, their families and their dairy partners.

The PETA Australia statement appeared recently in regional and rural media and claimed the free milk in schools program ended in 1973 after a report found the school milk pro-



Campaign based on 'exaggerations and mistruths' . . . PETA is back for another shot at the dairy industry.

gram "could not be justified on nutritional grounds".

Dairy Connect said there was ample contemporary scientific evidence of the lifelong nutritional benefits

of fresh milk in young human diets.

"Milk was an outright winner when its nutritional role in children's diets was compared with high-sugar

carbonated and energy drinks, as well as other alternative drinks," Mr Morgan said.

He said the health benefits delivered by fresh

nutritional dairy were on the public record.

"Milk contains essential nutrients including B vitamins for energy, vitamin A to help maintain a healthy immune system and calcium which helps build and maintain bone strength for growing children.

"Dairy foods also deliver minerals, such as iodine, magnesium, potassium and phosphorus."

PETA also claimed large sections of the population were lactose intolerant.

Mr Morgan said studies in the United Kingdom had estimated that two people in 10 in the British population were lactose intolerant.

PETA also said sales of milk were plummeting and dairy farms were closing down.

"While there are fewer farms, average herd size in Australia is trending upwards (from 93 in 1985 to 272 in NSW in 2019-20) and there is an emerging trend of large farm operations

with more than 1000 milkers," Mr Morgan said.

"Also, the latest Dairy Australia milk production report has seen milk production increasing in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, with national production rising 3.5 per cent."

The PETA letter circulating in the media also said people were realising the "cruelty involved" in dairy farming.

Mr Morgan said allegations of dairy farmer cruelty were not true.

"Why would farmers want to hurt the animals that create their daily income?"

"The overwhelming majority of farmers have strong bonds with their animals.

"Dairy farmers are also first-class environmental stewards who provide close and effective day-to-day care for Australia's dairy and farming landscape."