

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee

INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS IN AUSTRALIA'S LIVE EXPORT MARKETS

**Index of Documents Tabled at Canberra Hearing
Wednesday, 14 September 2011**

Date	Lodged By	Title/Subject	No of Pages
14/9/11	Sheepmeat Council of Australia	Opening Statement prepared for 14 September 2011 hearing – titled <i>Senate inquiry into improvements in animal welfare for Australian live export markets</i>	2
14/9/11	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Statement by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to the Senate Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry into "Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets", 14 September 2011	1

Senate inquiry into improvements in animal welfare for Australian live export markets

Sheepmeat Council of Australia is fully supportive of the live trade and the role that MLA and LiveCorp have played and continue to play in the ongoing development and servicing of the live export market in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region.

SCA is also committed to and actively engaged in the implementation of the changes flagged by the Government for all live export markets.

Our policy approach for live exports has been based on three factors.

- The economics of the trade, providing extra competition in the market place;
- The need to increase animal welfare in the markets to which Australian sheep are supplied, and;
- The enhanced opportunities that have arisen for our boxed products based on our reputation for supplying quality live sheep.

We are also conscious of a social responsibility that having been in the market place and developed markets, we must continue to meet the food requirements of our customers, for example in one of our larger markets, Bahrain, about 99% of live sheep imports are from Australia.

From a policy perspective the domestic and voyage sectors are now working well, especially as an outcome of the industry and Government partnership that came out of the Keniry Livestock Export Reviews. R&D continues to fine tune much of the specifics of these parts of supply chains but from a policy perspective the settings have delivered a process that meets Australian standards.

The Government's response to the Four Corners program has brought about a significant change in approach from a situation of continuous improvement to now being one of absolute assurance of welfare. It is a major change from the way we previously operated and will not be implemented 'overnight'.

We would reinforce that MLA has no direct commercial or regulatory power to implement change or to drive uptake of new processes and procedures, including those related to animal welfare improvements in our overseas markets.

One of your Committee's questions related to – "*expenditure and efforts on marketing and promoting live export to Australian producers*". MLA does not promote live export to producers over alternative markets. In fact there is a much greater investment in the marketing and promotion of chilled and frozen lamb and sheepmeat in domestic and export markets than in markets for live sheep.

Expenditure on live exports has been extremely modest in comparison to the overall MLA budget.

We are concerned about the simplistic comments about 'processing the livestock in Australia'. The live trade and meat trade are not substitutes. Australia exports boxed sheepmeat to the same countries to which it supplies live animals. The two products serve different market segments, and as a result, many markets will continue to demand live animals from other countries even in the absence of Australian livestock. There is also a real danger that any interruption to Australian live sheep supplies will result in reductions in demand for our boxed trade.

The industry accepts that Australian Government policy has now shifted from incremental advancement in animal welfare and has been fast tracked to immediate and full implementation of OIE standards to all supply chains involving Australian livestock. The industry does not oppose

this reform – quite the opposite, it helped put it in place. But its immediacy and wide sweeping nature poses challenges for the industry – challenges we are prepared to meet. A major advantage of the new arrangements is that it provides a mechanism such that in the future only non-compliant supply chains will be closed, rather than the whole trade suffering, in the event of non-compliance.

Without Australian livestock, our Middle East customers will have to look to other countries that have lower or nil health and welfare standards. Australia is one of 109 countries that exports livestock but is the only one that invests money and has an on-the-ground presence in export markets to improve animal welfare. In the MENA Region, one of the largest importers of live sheep, no other exporting country is investing a single dollar in animal welfare initiatives. Australia has made significant improvements in this region. Net global animal welfare has increased with the investment by the Australian industry and government in livestock export markets.

Statement by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to the Senate Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry into “Animal Welfare Standards in Australia’s Live Export Markets”

14 September 2011

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry welcomes the opportunity to appear again before the Committee. Further to our attendance at the hearing held 10 August 2011, the Department provides the following update on live export trade matters.

- The Hydros Consulting report to the Department on the Financial Impacts of Cattle Export Restrictions to Indonesia was made publically available on 16 August. This helped inform the government in relation to assistance packages for industry.
- The Australian Chief Veterinary Officer (ACVO) Report on Mark I and IV restraint boxes in Indonesia was publically released on 24 August 2011.
- The final reports of the Industry Government Working Groups (IGWGs) on Live Sheep and Goat Exports and Live Cattle Exports were provided to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on 26 August 2011. The Government is presently considering these reports.
- The Farmer Review provided its final report to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on 31 August 2011. The Government is presently considering this report.

There has also been good progress in the resumed trade in livestock to Indonesia. Up until around mid-day today, since the resumption of the trade there have been 20 notices of intention to export submitted from 6 exporters, covering over 80,000 head of cattle. Of this, around 33,000 head have been exported and 33,000 approved for export and about to be shipped. We have industry advice that around 200,000 head may be exported between when the trade resumed and the end of 2011.

We would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.