

## *Submission of Kathryn Keen To Senate Enquiry –*

### *Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets*

Most countries purchasing livestock from Australia do not have animal welfare laws to prevent cruelty. The vast majority of Australian livestock exported to the Middle East and South East Asian countries are slaughtered whilst fully conscious. Investigations in Indonesia have proven that cattle were being subject to an average of 11 cuts to the throat, whilst struggling during many minutes of pain and terror, before finally losing consciousness. In some cases recorded, it took 34 cuts before the animal finally lost consciousness. It is unacceptable for a civilised country such as Australia, to be participating in a trade that puts animals in such a barbaric situation.

Once purchased livestock are outside of Australia, it is not possible to have control over the way they are treated. Importing countries have been resistant to attempts by others at improving their animal welfare standards. By selling livestock to countries where cruelty is common, we are in effect condoning and encouraging the cruelty. The only way Australia can potentially encourage other countries to improve animal welfare standards, is to set an example; to demonstrate that we don't support or condone animal cruelty, by banning the export of live animals for slaughter.

The live export industry claims that Australia should continue live exports, in order to have influence on animal welfare standards in other countries. Yet this industry has had over 30 years to address these serious problems, and repeatedly been shown to have failed. Video footage taken in both South East Asia and the Middle East, over many years, has clearly proven that extreme cruelty continues. The cruelty inflicted on livestock in importing countries would be in breach of animal welfare laws in Australia.

The live export industry claims that if Australia doesn't sell the livestock to countries where cruelty occurs, that they will purchase from other countries. Yet in 2006, after the ban on live export to Egypt, (due to exposure of cruelty), Egypt greatly increased purchase of chilled meat imports from Australia, rather than importing livestock from elsewhere.

By ceasing live export we could rebuild the meat processing industry in Australia, which was decimated by the live exporters. The Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union, estimates that the live export industry has cost 40,000 meat worker's jobs and continues to undermine the sustainability of the abattoir <sup>1</sup>. A report by economic analysts S G Heilbron Pty. Ltd. estimated that the live export trade had cost the Australian economy \$1.5 billion in lost GDP, \$270 million in household income, and around 10,500 jobs <sup>2</sup>. Far from benefiting our economy, the live export trade has sent thousands of Australian jobs overseas, and has caused significant damage to the meat processing industry in Australia. It has also resulted in increased cost of meat in Australia, which has made meat unaffordable for many Australians.

The claims by the live export industry that importing countries would not purchase packaged chilled meat, due to alleged lack of refrigeration, have been proven to be false. New Zealand has benefited with greatly increased trade in packaged chilled meat to these countries, by ceasing their live exports. There is no reason Australia could not have the same result.

We do not allow other businesses to profit from animal cruelty, and should not be turning a blind eye to the cruelty in the live export trade. We are a civilised nation that expects and enforces certain ethical standards; including standards on our treatment of animals. As a civilised nation, we should cease live export, which is inherently cruel. This would not only fulfil our ethical standards on animal welfare, but would provide much needed employment growth in rural communities, and would add value to the beef industry in Australia.

For these reasons, and many others, I appeal to the government to ban live export.

Kathryn Keen

*References:*

<sup>1</sup> Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union <http://wa.amieu.asn.au/>

<sup>2</sup> Heilbron SG. 2000 Apr. *Impact of the live animal export sector on the Australian meat processing industry*. S G Heilbron Pty Ltd.