

David and Lyn Slade

15<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Senate Standing Committee

Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets

P O Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members,

We are writing this submission in support of the live export industry in Australia. As cattle and sheep producers we find it hard to believe that the government has almost destroyed the live export trade to Indonesia overnight based on one television program and a dubious but concerted and orchestrated campaign by animal activist groups. The authenticity of the material used in the television program, the payments used to obtain access and the veracity of the email campaign to members of parliament should be investigated.

We know from personal practice on our farm that Australian farmers care about animal welfare and conform to the highest standards of animal welfare. Please refer to the Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals for more information. Australia is recognised as having the highest standards of animal welfare standards in the world in the live export market.

It is a fact that the footage shown in the Four Corners program showed animal cruelty BUT it did not show that ALL animals exported from Australia were slaughtered in this way? If this ban was truly about animal welfare HOW can the inclusion of abattoirs that already conform to the highest slaughter standards in Australia be justified? Is animal welfare only about Australian animals? It is a FACT that the involvement of Australia and MLA in the live export industry has resulted in improved animal welfare standards. If Australia was to withdraw from these countries the opportunity for continued education and improvement will be lost. Are we happy for cruel slaughter of animals from other countries to continue – as long as it is not Australian animals – or should we be in there trying to make a difference?

The impact of this decision has been far reaching and will continue to have an impact for years to come. It is a FACT that the pastoral industry has been devastated both financially and emotionally by this sudden suspension. It is a FACT that huge animal welfare and environmental problems have been created through the holding of hundreds of thousands of additional animals on stations in the north. WILL the government take responsibility for feeding these animals and/or the humane destruction of them to prevent over grazing and greater environmental damage?

The impact does not just affect northern producers. Beef prices in our domestic market have also dropped resulting in loss of profitability for cattle producers in southern states as well. Will the government also take responsibility for this loss of income?

As producers directly involved in the sheep and beef industry, we find it unbelievable that government would make a snap decision to decimate an entire industry on the basis of one TV program. We need to be able to trust government to make sound and strategic decisions for the future based on all the facts and not be swayed by noisy special interest groups with a political agenda. There can be no sound decision making if decisions are based on a perceived popularity contest on whatever public opinion appears to be on the day and may well change tomorrow. Government decisions based on public opinion would mean we would never have a tax increase, or carbon tax, or go to war.

Australian farmers provide the Australian population with food produced to the safest and highest standards of animal welfare in the world, BUT Australian farmers are a minority group and our numbers are declining. Profitability on farms is and always has been low. Farming is a poor investment choice but we all do it because we are passionate about our animals, the land and our way of life. Government policy has impacted hugely on farm profitability and reduced the sustainability of Australian agriculture. WHERE is the strategic thinking within government about food security for the future? If government policy makes farming unsustainable then farmers can no longer produce the meat, fruit, milk etc that feeds our nation. Is it fair that we pay less for milk than we do for water? Is it fair that our orange growers are paid 3 – 5c per kilo? Is it fair that government policy has allowed two supermarket giants to control over 70% of the industry and the market power to lower prices to Australian producers?

Government has set the policies that directly affect the viability and sustainability of Australian agriculture and yet allow imported product into the country without imposing similar standards. Will the government ensure that all animal products imported into Australia have lifetime traceability and have been subject to humane slaughter practices? If not, why not? Is it fair and equitable to impose standards on Australian farmers and not require the same standards for imported products?

We are writing this submission in the hope that members from the committee will take the time to talk with and listen to real farmers. Please do not be swayed by an orchestrated campaign by a vocal minority. Security of food supply is important to our nation, Indonesia and all the countries to which we export. Australia is the world leader in animal welfare standards for live exports. Please support Australian Farmers.

Yours sincerely

---

David and Lyn Slade