

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on
Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Registered Office
29 Crawford Street
Katherine NT 0850

Postal Address
PO Box 1321
Katherine NT 0851

Tel 08 8972 9000
Fax 08 8971 2607

info@ropergulf.nt.gov.au
www.ropergulf.nt.gov.au
ABN 94 746 956 090

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Roper Gulf Shire Council resolved at its Ordinary Council Meeting on Wednesday, 20 July 2011 to submit the following with regard to the live export trade.

Roper Gulf Shire covers an area of 186,000 sq. km's in the eastern part of the Katherine region, Northern Territory. The ABS population estimate for the Shire as at June 2009 was 6905, a large proportion of whom are Indigenous. The main industries in the shire are mining, tourism and the pastoral industry and local government.

The Shire contains 56 pastoral properties ranging in size from 440 to 5000 sq. km's. Together these properties run in excess of 200,000 cattle.

The pastoral industry is a major local employer and provides one of the few local opportunities for employment of Indigenous people. In addition, Indigenous people are involved in the pastoral industry in their own right through the development of their own land through leasing to outside interests or through their self-owned operations.

For example, the Indigenous Land Corporation is investing substantial amounts in developing cattle breeding operations in the Shire on the Alawa and Mangarrayi Land Trusts aimed at producing animals for the live export trade and using other Indigenous owned land to stage cattle prior to shipping. These properties provide job opportunities for many local Indigenous people.

The live export trade provides market opportunities for cattle beyond the traditional aged bullocks to meatworks for manufacturing meat model which was the only market available for most of the 20th century.

Because our Shire has a narrow economic base and small population, the capacity to raise own-source revenue from rates etc is extremely limited. This has a detrimental impact on the levels of service delivery the Shire can provide. Our Shire wants to see all residents prosper and develop. However, with the pastoral industry in crisis at present there is a real possibility that rates revenue will be further affected because of an inability to pay due to hardship.

At present, with the live export trade to Indonesia in limbo (there are still no cattle being exported despite the suspension being lifted), cattle producers have no income. This is having a significant impact on local business with reduced custom and local employment is being affected hugely.

The pastoral industry is part of the fabric of life in the Roper Gulf Shire. The whole community, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous have strong connections and affinity to the industry. The live export trade has contributed to this through the income it provides and the impetus it has given to the further development of the industry.

Proposals to legislate the industry out of existence are both reactionary and short-sighted and place the lives and livelihoods of the residents of our Shire at great risk.

Yours sincerely



Clair O'Brien
Acting Mayor
Roper Gulf Shire Council
21 July 2011

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