

Dear Senate Enquiry:

The Current Live Export Ban Issues in Indonesia:

Whilst I prefer that cattle is slaughtered locally and I don't personally support the live trade, we do not have adequate slaughter facilities locally to meet the demands of the industry, therefore I do support fair and balanced argument regarding the merits of the ongoing trade that recognises this fact.

Where there are no locally based abattoir facilities or capacity in Western Australia or Northern Australia capable of slaughtering cattle locally, for the interim period, I do not believe we can consistently argue to prohibit this trade to Indonesia immediately, therefore I support the recently announced resumption of the trade. However this is on proviso that it can be demonstrated, independently verified and audited that Indonesian Abattoirs meet Australian Standards for slaughter. However, every effort should be made to replace live exports with local slaughtering operations with a view to an eventual end to live exports. I believe that after 18 years of efforts to improve standards in Indonesia that further animal cruelty can no longer be tolerated.

I would prefer investment back into re-establishing the local abattoirs in Broome, Derby and Wyndham together with transition arrangements to move away from live exports, so that the Northern Cattle producers have slaughtering facilities to get their livestock to market that support Australian jobs, and guarantee best practice slaughter standards and stop the deaths and suffering of cattle and sheep transported to overseas countries . This would be very good use for Government investment rather than investment in overseas operations. There also needs to be ongoing Government support for Regional Based industry. The ACIL Report showed that the Australian Economy would have benefitted by an estimated 20% per head of live sheep exported if there were adequate local slaughtering facilities.

I contend that local meat production would be far better - not only for the animals who are transported long distances for slaughter, but also for the Australian economy - than exporting live animals. I call for the enquiry to investigate how the trade could be phased out to enable the meat industry to ramp up while farmers and pastoralists adjust their operations.

Findings from the ACIL Tasman report entitled *The value of live sheep exports from Western Australia*

In October 2009, the ACIL Tasman report entitled *The value of live sheep exports from Western Australia* was released. The report concluded that a sheep processed domestically is worth 20% more to the Australian economy than one exported live, due to the capacity to add value in Australia. Other key findings of the 2009 ACIL Tasman report (downloadable from <http://www.rspca.org.au/how-you-can-help/campaigns/ban-live-export/acil-tasman-report.html>) were:

- The value of live sheep exports to farmers and the economy is very small compared to other rural commodities;

- Now is the time to signal a phase out of live sheep exports because the industry is already undergoing major structural reform;
- Farmers are already moving away from live sheep exports and into more profitable areas such as prime lamb and cropping;
- On mixed farming businesses there are many uses for sheep and the transition for farmers from live sheep to sheep meat is relatively simple;
- Phasing out live sheep exports won't affect the price of lamb or mutton in the long-term; and
- The farm-level adjustments required to phase out live sheep exports would not be extensive compared to changes already underway in the industry.

A second report from ACIL Tasman entitled *Economic analysis of Australian live sheep and sheep meat trade* was released later. This report proposed a number of strategies for increasing sheep meat export, including:

- 1) Promotional campaigns to drive demand for Australian beef and lamb in Australia's major export markets;
- 2) The Australian government could potentially replicate New Zealand's policy efforts to increase its access to the EU market. New Zealand's duty free quota for sheep meat is by far the largest in the EU.
- 3) Improvements in competitiveness through more efficient use of water and energy, maximising the recovery of saleable meat and edible offal, improving working conditions, increasing reproductive rates and decreasing mortality rates, reducing age at sale and lowering the costs of production.

The pastoralist industry has grown in the north to exploit the opportunity of exporting cattle from marginal rangelands to be fattened at their destination. As the producers expanded and changed their stock to breeds that meet the demand of the overseas buyers (bos indicus rather than bos taurus), the local processing industry was choked of the supply of animals for slaughter to sustain the abattoirs and downstream processing industries. So, now we have a situation where the local abattoir industry has shrunk, and in the north, disappeared altogether. Farmers and pastoralists have not diversified and are completely vulnerable to the export market. Ironically, they are in the same situation now that they were decades ago when the power of the unionised workforce in the meatworks industry controlled what farmers were paid for their animals, leaving them little option to sell their livestock elsewhere. The live exports industry, which may have been attractive at first as competition for local abattoirs, has failed to deliver a sustainable and diversified market for livestock.

Loss of revenue to exporters and suffering in transit

Being vulnerable to the export markets causes loss of revenue to exporters and great distress for the animals. For example, in 1990:

- the Mawashi Al Gasseem was forced to stay on the water for 16 weeks before a country would accept those of its sheep that remained alive; and
- many Australian shipments to Saudi Arabia were rejected due to claims of scabby mouth and other diseases. Death rates soared as animals waited on board ships languishing outside ports or en route to alternative destinations.

The incidents of cruelty, suffering and death for cattle, sheep and goats from starvation, gastro-enteritis, pneumonia, suffocation and crush injuries, and trauma from cruel handling are too many to innumerate. Some examples include:

- in 2010, 295 cattle died of pneumonia and heat stress in the Ocean Shearer en route to Egypt;
- in 2002, on MV Becrux, 880 of 1,195 cattle and 1,400 out of 60,000 sheep died when the vessel met extreme temperatures of heat and humidity in the Arabian Gulf. The remaining animals were rejected by Saudi Arabia and had to remain on board until another buyer was found to accept them;
- In 1999, on the Temburong 829 cattle suffocated when the ventilation failed.

Since 2006 AQIS has produced reports on high mortality voyages and these are now publicly available. There are 38 reports – triggered when a sheep shipment exceeds a death rate of 2%, and when a cattle shipment death rate exceeds 1% for long voyages (10 days or more) or 0.5% for shorter voyages.

It is a sad truth that no matter what agreements may be in place, what monitoring and controls may be instituted, and how much training and equipment may be provided to the destination countries of our livestock, once our animals leave our shores we have little control over what becomes of them. Therefore, the better long term solution is to rebuild the local meat processing industry.

The Four Corners report took footage from Animals Australia, and then investigated themselves, taking their own footage. The implication, in my reading of the programme, was that in abattoirs which were obviously known to and supported with equipment from Meat and Livestock Australia, Australian cattle were cruelly slaughtered. The report inferred that the practice could be widespread. The report made it clear that only a few abattoirs were visited, but it is significant that so much damning footage could be collected in a very short time. In any event, is this really the point? Even if the cruelty witnessed on the program is not practised in every abattoir in Indonesia, how much cruelty is acceptable? Does the Australian public not have the right to see the atrocious practices in which MLA and Livecorp apparently have been complicit?

It should be re-inforced that while the feedlot and slaughter industry provides employment opportunities in Indonesia, they also provide opportunities here in northern Australia. The question is put “is it really worth the human cost to ban something that can be fixed and fixed reasonably quickly?” In response I contend that if the animal welfare concerns can be

addressed quickly, why have Australia's attempts over 18 years to improve animal welfare in Indonesia been a spectacular failure? It is time to take a stand against live exports, and to find a better way.

Lessons from the New Zealand Livestock Industry

In New Zealand live export started to be phased out in 2003 when 60,000 sheep were stranded in the Mediterranean en route to the Middle East and most of them died after weeks of suffering. From that time there was an immediate and almost total ban on the sheep export trade. The ban was extended to live cattle in 2007 with the support of the farming community. I urge you to listen to the interview of John Anderton (formerly the New Zealand Minister for Agriculture and now Deputy Prime Minister) by Geraldine Doogue on ABC Saturday Extra on 18 June 2011 in which Mr Anderton states that it was "a combination of concern for animal welfare and fear of an economic backlash if NZ gained a reputation for treating animals badly that drove the ban on live exports." He went on to say that in any event live export is the lowest form of commodity export, where the exporter loses the added value of local processing, so "why would you risk blowing a far more lucrative business in favour of a trade that not only risks your reputation but gives a lower return"? New Zealand currently has a lucrative export trade of processed meat to many international markets, including the USA, Japan and Europe.

If the transition from live export to processed and packaged meat export makes sense on animal welfare and economic grounds, and was accomplished in New Zealand with so little fuss, there is no reason why it should not be similarly accomplished in Australia.

A Better Solution

I contend that the existing trade could be successfully replaced with an already established and halal-accredited chilled and frozen carcass industry. Animals could then be slaughtered within Australia under animal welfare provisions. A local halal-accredited chilled meat trade would also benefit the local economy and create jobs within the economy. We believe our farmers, and our economy would be better off (the ACIL Report estimates 20% per live head of sheep slaughtered and cattle should be of similar value) if we ensured any animal produce sent overseas was produced locally, and utilising the latest up to date humane technology, whilst ensuring the consumer received food prepared according to their beliefs. To date, there has been little effort to develop this approach.

I hope you can achieved a win-win solution that minimizes suffering to livestock, keeps the industry viable, encouraging investment into Australian slaughtering facilities that put Australian people into work and end the misery of the live animal export trade.

Regards,
Rod Botica

CC Tony Crook MHR, Member for O'Connor