

### **Role and effectiveness of Government.**

The live export industry has been operational for more than 2 decades in Australia. It has seen a number of changes of leadership over this time. Poor animal welfare has been known about for many years, brought about by several investigations by animal welfare organisations, and presented to various ministers. However, much of this information has not been acted upon by said governments. Instead, it has been passed back to industry to address ongoing welfare issues.

It seems the government of the day has been quite happy to take revenue from this trade, but not the responsibility that goes with it.

### **Role and effectiveness of MLA.**

Self regulation of industry is generally an oxymoron. The case is never more evident than with MLA. While raking in vast amounts of revenue from farmers at \$5 per head of cattle, and receiving tax payer funds, MLA chose to spend enormous amounts on public relations exercises rather than on animal welfare issues. Their meagre attempts at addressing poor practices, was to design and install restraint boxes in abattoirs in Indonesia. The Mark 1 box has been slammed by cattle experts, including Prof Temple Grandin, as they actually do more harm than good when used. Ongoing monitoring included the occasional visit by MLA staff into abattoirs, and some attempts at re-training slaughtermen. Unfortunately, the transient nature of some Indonesian workers makes this a futile attempt at teaching better slaughter techniques.

According to MLA's information on their own website, instances of animal abuse were known to them from an early stage. MLA has on several occasions, commissioned research into the live trade, but upon findings that were negative to the trade, chose not to continue with the research, or not publish the results.

### **Economic impact in Australia.**

The live trade has been said to contribute up to 10,000 regional and remote jobs in northern Australia. If the live trade were to be halted, and processing of animals to remain in Australia, this figure would not alter very much. The farmers would still grow their cattle as is the case now. They would still require truck drivers, only the destination would change. Wharf workers would still be needed to load the ships, only the cargo would be boxed meat instead of live animals.

Some may lose their jobs, but many more would be needed in the abattoirs, currently laying dormant or under-utilised, for example in Queensland. Therefore, the economic impact to Australia from a change to carcass only trade would more likely be a positive one – more employment and value adding of our product.

### **Why we should ban live trade.**

The live animal trade has been inherently cruel from day one. It begins with a horrendous boat trip, of which the accepted death rate is 1%. That amounts to a phenomenal number of animals over the years that didn't even make their intended destination. Upon arrival, sheep can be treated in the most distasteful way in the Middle East. Bound and thrown into car boots in searing temperatures, or dragged along belly first, to face a slow and painful death at the hands of an inexperienced person, then left to bleed out in the street.

Cattle sent to Indonesia, are often tortured before bleeding out in primitive slaughterhouses, where rusty and blunt knives are used. Shocking examples of this were shown in the recent 4 Corners program on ABC TV, after first being investigated by Animals Australia.

This industry has had more than enough time to fix the problems and has not. There are too many issues in too many countries that require so much work. The OIE guidelines fall well below our own standards of slaughter here in Australia. The easiest and most humane option is to ban live export and change to carcass only trade, to all countries.

The industry has shown that it cannot be trusted to ensure animal welfare practices are adhered to. They seem to be more concerned with their corporate image than examples of inhumane treatment of Australian animals, and how to go about changing bad practice. MLA has ample funds to address these issues, but has chosen not to.

Only one country has improved significantly on animal welfare, Jordan. This is because Lyn White from Animals Australia has worked extensively with Princess Alia bint al Hussein to ensure the use of stunning animals in the large abattoirs. MLA and the Australian government have had no part in this breakthrough. Why has it been left to an animal welfare organisation that survives on donations from the public, to do the job of MLA?

The live trade is actually bad for Australia. It has taken away jobs from abattoir workers, jobs in processing and given the country a bad reputation. The live trade tells the rest of the world that we as a nation do not care for the well being of our own livestock and that we care more for the money generated from the trade than treating animals with the respect they deserve.

It has been said that Australia has ridden on the sheep's back to prosperity – well perhaps it is time we gave the beasts a break from this burden.

The only moral choice we have is to ban the live animal trade entirely.

Sharon Rabusin, Victoria