

## SUBMISSION

I make this submission in support of the Australian live export industry for consideration in the 'Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets' Senate Inquiry being conducted by the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee.

I refer directly to the Terms of Reference that the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee will inquire and report on and my opinion in relation to each Term of Reference is as follows:-

**1. Investigate and report into the role and effectiveness of Government, Meat and Livestock Australia, Livecorp and relevant industry bodies in improving animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets, including:**

- a) The level, nature and effectiveness of expenditure and efforts to promote or improve animal welfare standards with respect to all Australian live export market countries;
- i) expenditure and efforts on marketing and promoting live export to Australian producers;
- ii) ongoing monitoring of the subscription to, and practise of, animal welfare standards in all live export market countries;
- iii) actions to improve animal welfare outcomes in all other live export market countries and the evidence base for these actions.

Australia is making a significant contribution to improving the animal welfare outcomes. MLA spends a great deal of money in education and physical changes to the welfare of animals that are live exported. There are plenty of organisations that have loud views on the issue but have never contributed a dollar towards the physical changes they see as necessary. MLA does have internal problems in higher levels with vested interest in domestic beef yet making decisions on Live Export.

Live Corp is unique to Australia and a wonderful initiative. I believe there could be more design put into the facilities in Indonesia in particular however in the past 10yrs vast improvement can be seen thanks to Australian involvement. We are the only country to continually care for the animals after they become the property of another country, which is a deep commitment. Change is effective from within and the continued training and support to importing countries is leading to a steady rise in stock handling skills and facilities. Stun Guns should have been added to the physical changes made and that is a serious mistake to have omitted them from the "knocking box" facilities.

Producers and those involved on Australian soil have invested millions of dollars and lifetimes of work into improving animal welfare outcomes. Each year more and more station hands are trained in accredited Low Stress Stock handling courses, private companies have revolutionised transport vehicles for animals including the ships that are the only custom built livestock carriers with welfare in mind in the world. Many stations have invested in different infrastructure improvements to facilitate animal behaviour and many young people in the industry are highly qualified in animal health and welfare.

In the long term we need to investigate ways to diversify the markets for Australian beef. Abattoirs are a start to process the cattle that cannot be exported. However the cattle in the Top End are not suited to southern MSA specifications. There is no large scale cropping to support feedlots and the seasonal nature of the beef industry which is dictated by the monsoon would mean domestic processing of beef would also be seasonal. There is no market for the packaged meat and flooding the domestic market would devastate the other primary Industries leading to a massive collapse in the Australian economy. And despite all this there would be no change in the slaughter houses in Indonesia! We must remain connected to this industry in order to suggest changes and offer support.

**b)** The extent of knowledge of animal welfare practices in Australia's live export markets including:

- i)** formal and informal monitoring and reporting structures;
- ii)** formal and informal processes for reporting and addressing poor animal welfare practices.

Many producers and agents travel regularly overseas to destinations that accept Australian stock. People are generally interested in where the cattle go but nothing like the 4 Corners report has ever been reported in my time in the Industry. People are aware of cultural differences that require a specific product but the abuse that was filmed is something else altogether!

To sell cattle to the Live export market they must meet stringent health and welfare specifications. Any animal that is in anyway compromised including superficial blemishes is discarded and deemed unsalable. It is well known that abused animals are unnecessarily stressed leading to health issues, injury, less value and of course poorer quality meat. Education of the value of healthy low stressed cattle has been the catalyst for improved animal welfare standards.

People across the Northern Australian livestock industries rely on the quality of their stock to sell their animals so anyone with a record for sickly and neglected animals is rarely successful in business. The distinct lack of alternate markets means that cattle must meet the stringent regulations for live export.

Cattle are inspected by vets, stock inspectors and other animal health professionals at many stages during the Live Export process. On property inspections are often carried out through the Department of Primary Industries in the NT on a voluntary basis to improve biosecurity and to keep the department in touch with the landholders.

**2. Investigate and report on the domestic economic impact of the live export trade within Australia including:**

- a)** Impact on regional and remote employment especially in northern Australia;
- b)** Impact and role of the industry on local livestock production and prices;
- c)** Impact on the processing of live stock within Australia.

The loss of live exports as a market in regional Australia has the ability to bring the entire country to its knees. Many indigenous people rely solely on the cattle stations to support the services that keep them on their country. Without larger businesses to supply employment, services, support regional communities and businesses there is no plausible method of survival in today's world for the aboriginal people. Many have a deep seated connection to the pastoral industry and due to the distinct lack of

alternate industries they have found a form of employment and lifestyle they enjoy. Quick look at the state of communities without ties to an outside industry will reveal a welfare dependant society lacking culture and hope.

People living in regional Australia have a deep connection to the land and would be unwilling to simply abandon their country. Many people are manually skilled and prefer to work in isolated areas. These are unique skills and these individuals hold a significant amount of local knowledge that has been incredibly useful to many government bodies and educational institutes. These people do not like living in regional centres and have devoted a lifetime developing skills to do an important and difficult job.

The various support industries in the outback will fold up without support. Livestock producers support small towns and regional areas. They buy fuel, machinery, manufactured goods, volunteer in emergency services and social groups. These people will all be redundant if there is no financial and social reason to be in the bush. Dumping these people on bursting urban centres would be a welfare disaster and a social calamity. Removing people from the land by bankrupting them and the severe emotional damage of disposing of the excess cattle will take the country back a hundred years. This is something Australia cannot afford to do in the current economic and social world climate.

Producers must be able to off load sale stock to reduce numbers and make way for the next seasons calves. They must receive their annual income to support the breeding herds and growing stock. These animals still need supplements, medicine, handling and pumps running for water. Simply cutting the supply chain off doesn't help a pregnant cow or yearling steer. There is also the cost of weed and feral animal control and land management to factor in and most stations only get one pay check and that is from the annual sale of cattle.

Domestic cattle prices will slump with an influx of cattle on the domestic market. With a loss in value it will become impossible for slaughter houses to deal with the excess cattle and the value of the stock will mean they will be culled in the paddock. Any reduction in beef price will lower other meats leading to a collapse in agriculture as people stretch already thin margins. This will in turn raise unemployment figures, lower consumer confidence and affect all other sectors. A loss of people in the outback will directly affect tourism and natural resource management.

There is no current market for boxed beef however there is a booming market for live animals. It would be easier to fix a few abattoirs than to try and change the way the world eats and ultimately remove ourselves from the industry.

### **3. Other related matters.**

I was discussing the fate of the vast majority of cattle in the Top End if they have nowhere to go with a stockman friend of mine. This fellow isn't an emotional type, but he has been around in many industries from the old days of the abattoirs, the hide trade and the stock camps. We were talking about the possibility of having to cull animals if they couldn't be cared for or sold. He shook his head and stared at his boots and said quietly " If its anything like BTEC, it will be a terrible show" He went on to describe buffalo cows dead from a shot into their spine after laying in the heat for days but worse still was the calf beside them starving and frightened. The animals that ran and hid after getting a wound from a off centre shot who limped out of the timber with septic wounds or missing body parts. These animals didn't run from the choppers because that was before we used them for mustering. Imagine how hard it will be to destroy these animals in vast areas today when some run, some hide and some mob up trustingly. Is that better than a week long trip to Indonesia, a gut full of tucker and a

stun gun bolt to the skull?

Signed:	Rashida Khan Dip Animal Nutrition, GC RangelandMan
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