

**12 July 2011**

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport  
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Australia

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**Subject: Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport: Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets**

**Dear Committee Secretary**

I refer to the above mentioned inquiry in particular the terms of reference items:

*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.*

**Regional and remote employment especially in North Australia.**

There has been a number of local community business built up over time right across Northern Australia to service the live export industry and its associated supply chain. As the live export industry has become an economically sustainable industry, in, and for all of Northern Australia, business within Northern Australia have been able to develop and grow, thus giving medium to long term security to their employees and the owners.

From the local food store, road house, tyre services, mechanics, stock agents; and the list goes on; which continue to grow, so to do the surrounding communities. These communities in turn become more attractive places to live for singles, couples and families. It is important to note that many communities also have large indigenous populations, and the live export industry is a direct driver of employment in these communities.

The live export trade has contributed to sustainable populations in many remote and regional communities. These sustainable populations influence and make use of government services and providers which in turn has a cyclical affect of bringing in more support and services.

The live export industry is a significant contributor to employment in regional and remote Northern Australia.

**Impact and role of this industry on local livestock production and prices.**

History will shown that since the commencement of the live export industry the Northern Australian beef industry has played a vital role in the development of communities within Northern Australia, The live export industry was made for Northern Australia. The bos

indicus breeds, most closely associated with this industry are very much suited for the Northern climatic conditions along with their resilience to cattle ticks. .

Due to the cattle tick prevalence in the north, the live export industry has facilitated a trade less reliant on meeting the restrictions and cost of meeting bio-security provisions when accessing southern markets which in the past was the only market. This also results in less cost to government via bio-security measures.

Another beneficial impact of the live export industry is that it has given the beef industry, right across Australia, a floor price. The live export industry has provided producers across Northern Australia an option, dependant on market trends, for selling their product.

Since the commencement of the live export trade, management and animal welfare practises across Northern Australia have been improved substantially, as on-farm net income has increased, allowing for expenditure on farm infrastructure to enhance cattle handling and best practise management handling skills.

Before commencement of the live export trade the calving percentage in Northern Australia was around about 50% to 60 %. Due to the industry becoming more sustainable, producers have been able to invest in better pasture management, improved genetics and in production systems which have assisted the Northern Australian beef producers with increasing their calving percentages to around 70% to 80%. Northern Australia has become known as the '*calf factory*' for large parts of Australia's beef producing areas. Some of Northern Australia's producers have the ability to produce cattle for the northern and southern Market thus making it a well balanced industry giving the beef producer long term options in a more sustainable industry.

### **Impact on the processing of livestock within Australia.**

Northern Australia was first introduced to the beef industry by our pioneers, when they bought in the European (*bos taurus*) breeds. European cattle found it hard to cope with the harsh conditions, the environment, and the cattle tick. The beef producers also found it tough going and infrastructure development was kept to a minimum in a marginal business environment.

As the market for what was produced remained stagnant and the cost of production increased, the live export trade along with the changes in breeds became more important. The live export trade was an obvious addition to the long term sustainability of Northern Australia.

The export trade has had little or no impact on the processing plants in Australia as they all went broke along with the beef producers long before the live export trade began. The backers of the argument for establishing a processing plant in Northern Australia will claim that jobs have been lost due to the live export trade. I ask how many processing plants employ Australian labour only. A number of workers in the processing industry are overseas employees.

Weather patterns and seasonal conditions interrupt the supply of cattle to meatworks in Northern Australia, thus making the industry unsustainable. The live export trade is far more suitable management option for the northern beef producers. Indonesia can fill up on feeder cattle during the dry season (April through to August late September).

The management of the beef industry in Northern Australia lends itself to a partnership with the environment, climate and communities of Northern Australia.

The live export trade was absolutely denigrated by ABC 4 Corners, Animal Australia and the RSCPA. While the practices shown in Indonesia are not in any way supported by Australia's beef producers these practices are not the doing of Australian producers.

Banning the live export to Indonesia or to any other country will do nothing to improve the animal welfare within these countries.

To improve the animal welfare issues within these countries, the Australian beef producers need to be viable long term so they can in turn assist in influencing our trading partners in improving their standards.

The \$30m Federal Governments package would be better spent improving animal welfare issues Indonesia.

As for Indonesia becoming self sustainable in their own beef production, one needs to have a look at the size of their country and their population growth and then look at the size of Northern Australia that produces the cattle for the trade, and our population in that area. This industry will continue to grow and survive and one doesn't need to be a rocket scientist to work that out.

I would also like to comment that if the government of the day, via this inquiry, has to take submissions on what impact the (loss of) live export trade will have on Northern Australia or Australia as whole, and then we as a nation are in real trouble.

Yours Sincerely

Cr Eric (Rick) Britton  
Mayor, Boulia Shire Council, Qld