

## SUBMISSION

### **Preamble:**

I make my submission as a concerned citizen, who believes we should treat *all* living things with care, and who has both family and friends involved in the beef industry.

Like many other Australians who viewed the Four Corners program, “A Bloody Business” on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2011, I afterwards passed a night of horrified sleeplessness, unable to remove the images of horrendous cruelty from my mind.

However, in subsequent days, my thoughts also turned to the incredible complexities of this issue, including but not limited to:

1. The sovereign rights of other nations, to which Australia is exporting (in this case, Indonesia), and what our capacity might be to influence the actions of another nation;
2. The religious and cultural mores of other nations (in this case, Halal slaughter);
3. The economic status of other nations (for example, the availability of refrigeration);
4. The economic status of our top end primary producers and what capacity they might have to diversify into other agricultural markets;
5. The geographical factors at the north end of Australia (in particular the Northern Territory) which would impact on the ability to change from predominantly live export to other types of meat markets - in particular, factors related to the “tyranny of distance” so common in our country – for example, trucking of live cattle over long distances is also a prolonged ordeal for the animals and very expensive;
6. The impact on indigenous Australians, if the northern beef industry were to fail, given that indigenous persons already struggle against great odds to raise themselves from third-world status;
7. The validity of the “investigation” carried out by Animals Australia and Four Corners, given that only 11 abattoirs out of hundreds in Indonesia were featured, and given concerns which have since been raised that the footage is old (based on

the cattle tag numbers) or produced under false circumstances (rumours that the slaughtermen involved were actually encouraged to behave as they did).

In short, any assessment of this issue must be *cool and calm-headed*, rather than based on emotive images.

An adequate resolution to this issue will be *complex, measured and multifaceted*.

Simplistic solutions, such as the call to ban all live export imminently, will not be adequate.

### **Terms of Reference:**

*On 16 June 2011, the Senate moved that the following matters be referred to the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 25 August 2011:*

- 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.*
  - 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.*
- 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.*
- 3. Other related matters.*

I will leave some of the terms of reference to those who have first-hand experience of the practicalities involved, and will comment on the others as below:

*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*

I, and my contacts in the beef industry, would support an investigation into the actions of Meat and Livestock Australia.

MLA receives significant funding through their transaction levy of \$5 per head on sale of cattle – this can result in up to \$20 per animal as animals progress through the breeding, growing out and finishing stages, prior to slaughter.

My industry contacts are very angry with MLA. Contrary to public perception, most producers in the live export trade had **no idea** that the practices depicted by Four Corners were happening. Many of them never leave the farm for a holiday, let alone follow their animals all the way to Indonesian abattoirs. They have placed their trust in the MLA to ensure humane treatment of their animals.

The footage provided by Four Corners would indicate that the cattle involved have been *well-treated* prior to slaughter, based on their appearance, and certainly that is the aim of Australian producers – maltreatment of their animals is counter-productive – therefore, they are devastated to think such treatment could be occurring.

I believe the majority of Australians would be very interested to hear more about what “formal and informal” processes have been employed by MLA to encourage and monitor humane animal treatment.

I would particularly hope that the Committee will view and assess formal documentation from all abattoirs in which MLA has been involved in Indonesia.

It is my understanding that the footage shown by Four Corners is not representative of the majority of abattoirs. Therefore I would hope that this Inquiry will also assess the Four Corners data for possible biases and inaccuracies.

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

There have been calls for abattoirs within Australia to undertake domestic processing of cattle (with the inclusion of Halal slaughter) and for the boxed frozen meat to be exported.

This would seem a reasonable goal to be explored – indeed, the the SG Heilbron report of 2010, commissioned by the meat-processing industry, found that **in Queensland** the live export industry is *out-competing* the meat-processing industry, due to certain trade-protectionist strategies employed within Indonesia, such as refusal to take certain cuts of processed meat, and programs of subsidies to Indonesian feedlotters.

The report noted that growing standards of living in Asian nations (including greater demand for meat as a source of protein, and greater access to refrigeration) will over time increase the market for pre-processed frozen meat, and that the Queensland industry should position itself in readiness for this.

However, a number of issues would need to be resolved, including *allowing adequate time for the transition from live to boxed export*, and these are particularly relevant for the cattle industry of **the Northern Territory**.

The issues for the Northern Territory include:

1. There are currently no abattoirs located in the northern end of Australia. The most northern facility is in Townsville, Queensland, whereas there is none in the Northern Territory and none in the northern part of Western Australia.
2. Transporting cattle from the northern end to southern abattoirs involves a long hot dusty cramped road trip, with limited food and water – this being vastly more inhumane than travel in an air-conditioned boat which allows free movement to feed.
3. The type of cattle which are suited to the northern terrain and climate are *Bos Indicus* species (Brahman-related) – which originate from Asian countries and whose meat is desired in Asian markets; however, Australian palates are accustomed to and prefer meat from the *Bos Taurus* species, which are not suited to the northern Australian climate.
4. It is my understanding that a kind of *synergy* exists between the cattle industry in Northern Australia and the feedlot industry in Indonesia – Northern Australia is suitable country for growing out beef cattle to a certain level but there can be a shortage of feed for the final growing to slaughter-readiness; whereas Indonesia has a dearth of cheap feed available for fattening up.
5. Northern Australia is subject to tropical monsoons, such that an abattoir may be able to operate for only 6 months per year, requiring seasonal workers.

A full analysis would be needed to assess the economic viability of meat-processing works in northern Australia.

There may be a need for some government funding (as indeed I believe there *has been* government assistance previously towards the building of live-export facilities in Darwin and Northern Queensland).

With particular reference to a) *Impact on regional and remote employment especially in northern Australia*, it is important to note the following:

1. The Indigenous Land Corporation owns and operates 12 pastoral businesses, covering 2.3 million hectares, and employing around 350 people;
2. The cattle industry is the Northern Territory's third largest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) earner and accounts for 50% of all primary production;
3. The live export industry currently employs 13,000 people and provides \$1.8 billion towards Australia's GDP each year.

The cattle industry in northern parts of Australia is *absolutely vital* to residents of those regions, including to the indigenous residents.

The recent suddenly-implemented ban nearly brought the entire industry to its knees and may yet result in the demise of beef-related industries in northern Australia if resumption does not occur quickly enough.

### 3. Other related matters.

There seems to be a “disconnect” in the minds of animal rights activists regarding true concern for the welfare of animals. While banning live export of Australian-grown animals will prevent inhumane treatment of *our* animals, if the kind of inhumane treatment shown on Four Corners is as rife as the program seemed to indicate, then the inhumane slaughter of cattle (non-Australian cattle, but still deserving of humane treatment, surely?) will continue *ad infinitum* – or at least until the Indonesian community calls for changes from within.

While we may have *limited* influence over our neighbours, we can bring greater influence from the *inside*, than if we are *outside the closed door*. I would hope that this Inquiry could evaluate and make recommendations regarding processes for assisting our export partners in the humane treatment of *all* slaughter animals.

### **In Summary:**

The humane treatment of animals which are intended for slaughter is an important moral and ethical imperative. However, it cannot occur “at all costs”. There must be a balance between the welfare of animals and the welfare of people who depend on these animals for their livelihood.

Whatever happens next for the live-export industry, I hope this Inquiry will take into account the vital significance of the beef industry to the northern regions of Australia, and will ensure that this complex issue is resolved in a *careful and measured way*, without further “knee-jerk” reactions.

Senator Xenophon’s proposed amendment allows for a transition period of three years, with cessation of all live export in July 2014. I hope the Inquiry would seek advice from industry experts regarding the adequacy of this time frame to bring around such a transition, and thus ensure that any changes will occur over a manageable time period without crippling primary production in northern Australia.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission,

Dr Julene Haack