

Submission - Independent Review into Australia's Livestock Export Trade

The outcome of the investigation by Lyn White of Animals Australia, regarding the Live Export Trade to Indonesia, which was aired on Four Corners in June 2011, was one of mass shame and horror amongst the majority of our Nation. I find myself reeling from great disbelief and disgust that any animal should ever be subjected to such brutality and inhumane handling, leading up to a death that is neither quick nor efficient.

I was aware that there had been horror stories surrounding the Live Export trade for many years; however nothing my imagination could have created could compete with the evil and horror that was witnessed by Lyn White in Indonesia.

The industry bodies, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and Livecorp, whom the farmers have been paying to ensure satisfactory welfare standards, have failed to provide any welfare standards at all. And furthermore, have received warnings on a number of occasions regarding concerns surrounding this. MLA and Livecorp have failed the farmers, the Australian community, and most of all the animals they are supposed to be 'managing' and caring for, while continuing to make enormous profits, part of which could have been re-invested into ensuring vastly improved welfare standards.

Indonesia have made it even more difficult by preventing any of our officials from investigating their abattoirs to ascertain current practice standards, and have further advised that the welfare of the animals, and the practice of slaughter in Indonesia is basically none of our business.

The religious argument we hear for live export to these regions is to ensure the slaughter is Halal. However, Islamic Law states that *"Muslims are enjoined to slaughter their livestock by slitting the animal's throat in a swift and merciful manner, reciting God's name with the words, "In the name of God, God is Most Great" (Qur'an 6:118-121). This is in acknowledgement that life is sacred, and that one must kill only with God's permission, to meet one's lawful need for food."* (About.com – Islamic dietary law.) There is nothing merciful or swift in the atrocities we have witnessed. Surely the slaughter performed in the 11 investigated abattoirs in Indonesia would be in breach of Islamic Law, which dictates that excessive pain during slaughter is a sin, as is slaughter with a blunt blade, as described in Wikipedia.

As a multi-cultural nation, we embody many faiths, all of which are appalled at any abuse of 'God's' creation.

The Australian Government has also been aware of this situation long before the Four Corners expose, with Joe Ludwig personally having knowledge of these despicable trade practices for some time. As was reported in *The Australian*, "Joe Ludwig received a confidential briefing recommending the Government "exercise leadership" and "influence outcomes" to protect the industry or face "a real risk they could lose public acceptance"". This briefing was given to Minister Joe Ludwig more than 8 months ago.

The Australian meat industry was devastated when Live Exports took away a large proportion of their produce. Many jobs were lost and meat production businesses closed down as a result of the live export trade. New Zealand's ban of live exports is proof that it can be done without detriment to our national industry. By moving away from live exports they worked on processing within their own country, thus ensuring processing met with NZ standards whilst also building on-shore industry. Thus many more employment opportunities were created for New Zealanders. The result of this approach has led to a significant value growth in the chilled and packaged export of meat products over the last 10 years. There is no reason Australia could not follow New Zealand's lead. They have proven the success of this alternate approach.

I have great moral and compassionate concerns about any justification of continuing the Live Export Trade when there is such suffering and cruelty from the minute these animals leave our shores. Not only do these gentle animals suffer from the appalling conditions on these ships for extended periods of time, with deaths and illness common outcomes, the final experience for these sentient beings, is a painful, drawn-out and inhumane death.

Finally, an analogy if I may. The Prime Minister is currently trying to allay fears regarding the closure of 'dirty' coal industries and the associated job losses, by talking up their plan to support business to develop clean energy industry and the associated job creations. Why then would it not work equally the same with allaying farmer's concerns regarding redevelopment of onshore meat production and the export of frozen meat to consumers, thereby preventing cruelty and public outcry, and creating jobs within our borders.

"Advance Australia Fair" This government has the opportunity to ensure this reality – BAN LIVE EXPORTS!

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Lawton-Clark