

Submission by Kathryn Woolfe to the Senate Inquiry into Live Exports.

The torture of animals is unacceptable in a civilized nation, and yet, over the past thirty years Australia has shipped more than one hundred and fifty million sheep and cattle into overseas slaughter houses, where they were mistreated, and endured inhumane handling and slaughter without stunning.

A civilized nation, bestows many advantages; it also imposes moral obligations. The Live Export Industry negates one of these obligations, namely, animal welfare. I am ashamed, and distressed by the mistreatment of Australian animals at the hands of those concerned with the live export industry. This industry has been ongoing for over three decades; animals have been shipped to Indonesia for nearly two decades. Nevertheless, I have not yet heard any admittance of culpability by those involved in this unpardonable cruelty.

I believe two of the most worthy characteristics of this country are compassion, and a sense of fair play. We saw these qualities when the Australian public reacted with outrage at the callous and brutal mistreatment of animals in Indonesian slaughter houses.

I find it reprehensible for this nation to continue the live export trade. We cannot protect our animals once they leave the refuge of Australian shores. There is no way we can ensure their wellbeing when they are shipped to countries where Australian welfare standards do not apply. Evidence overwhelmingly substantiates the ineffectuality of the Government, the MLA, LiveCorp and relevant industry bodies, in improving welfare standards.

- The Live Export Industry is incapable of raising animal welfare standards to levels which are acceptable to Australian benchmarks. This is evidenced by thirty years of animal mistreatment, during which the MLA and associated bodies failed in their duty of care towards millions of animals. The Australian community has lost faith in the industry and in their incessant promises to improve animal welfare.

- Investigations by Animals Australia in the Middle East revealed horrific abuse to Australian sheep.
- The recent investigations into Indonesian slaughter houses, by Animals Australia; and a scientific assessment of the investigation carried out by the RSPCA, revealed blatant disregard of animal welfare by the MLA and LiveCorp.

Stunning before Slaughter

After witnessing the reality of conscious slaughter, on ‘Four Corners’ I believe it is immoral to slaughter an animal without stunning. Many people could not bear to watch cattle thrashing, and twitching their tortured bodies, and bellowing while they were whipped, kicked, and beaten. If humans could not bear to watch, how bad must it have been for the animals, the victims of the live export industry?

If an animal must be killed, it must be done quickly and as painlessly as possible. Stunning before slaughter should be mandatory. This is a moral-responsibility, and the Australian public have expressed outrage at the absence of stunning, in overseas abattoirs. The throat cutting of a conscious animal is the lowest form of brutality. It is an iniquitous way to treat an animal, in the last moments of life. If we must take life, we must do it with the dignity, we ourselves would expect in our final moments.

How many of us would care to undergo surgery without an anesthetic? And yet, animals are slaughtered without stunning, this means they are fully conscious when their throats are cut.

- **OIE Standards are shamefully inadequate they are minimum animal welfare standards.**

The OIE standards of animal welfare will not protect our livestock from the brutal treatment we have witnessed in the Middle East, and Indonesia. The OIE standards apply to third world countries, they are basic welfare standards. They are not acceptable to Australian standards of animal welfare. OIE guidelines allow non-stunned slaughter and roping slaughter. It is also well known, that even these inadequate OIE standards are

routinely breached, resulting in immense cruelty. There is no way to monitor the treatment of our livestock once they leave our shores. The Australian government and the MLA cannot enforce acceptable animal welfare standards in overseas nations; neither can they track the progress of cattle once they reach Indonesia, in spite of all the reassurances to the contrary. Cattle and other livestock will be given no protection against the brutality that is intrinsic to the Live Export Industry, and has been evidenced for three decades.

The Australian designed, Mark1 Restraint Boxes were installed into slaughter houses by the MLA. The footage viewed on “Four Corners” showed the cruelty of the Mark1 Restraint boxes. I perceive their use as further evidence of the callous neglect of animal welfare at the hands of the industry.

In spite of these facts the MLA, LiveCorp, the Government and associated industries do not claim culpability for the animal cruelty of live exports. These boxes are still in use. Australian animal welfare standards would prohibit the use of the Mark1 Restraint boxes in this country. Nevertheless, they are an integral element in the slaughter of animals in the live export industry.

Advance Australia Fair

In an era when so many of our industries are going offshore, there is an opportunity to develop, and expand Australia's meat processing industry. Yet, the government, chooses to ignore Australian development, and instead, exports livestock overseas.

The only way to ensure the humane treatment of livestock is to phase out live exports, and ensure the slaughter occurs in Australia. The Australian people will applaud this outcome. It will restore compassion into our nation, and remove the shame of live exports. The only logical action is to support the passage of the Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011 (No.2) and the Live Animal Export and Prohibition Bill 2011 (No.2). During the phasing out period it is recommended that the industry implement mandatory stunning, discontinues the use of Mark1 Restraint

Boxes, and adheres to high standards of animal welfare, not the minimum OIE standards. In the interim the industry must be exposed to greater transparency, and regulatory scrutiny.

The Australian community is outraged and is demanding an end to live exports. Animal cruelty is not part of the Australian ethos, and it is not acceptable to us.

Kathryn Woolfe MSc.