

**SUBMISSION
SENATE ENQUIRY:
IMPROVEMENTS IN ANIMAL WELFARE FOR AUSTRALIAN LIVE EXPORTS**

As the founder and developer of a successful web site for lost and found animals in the top end of Australia www.telaf.wordpress.com and as a member of numerous animal organisations, I welcome the opportunity to make a submission on this enquiry.

I am gravely concerned that Senator Ludwig (and presumably other members of cabinet) actually knew about these atrocities many months prior to the footage being aired on National television, yet nothing was done until the huge public outcry forced the issue. The fact the Government has now recommenced the trade with very little having changed simply shows shallowness in intent and a complete disregard to the suffering of animals. The live export industry has never been, and will never be, ethically viable and should be stopped immediately and permanently. Whilst images of the treatment of our animals in overseas abattoirs is horrific, the suffering begins with the commencement of the long road and sea journey. Every part of this trade is steeped with animal suffering, much of which could be avoided if we slaughtered in Australia and exported carcasses in the same way as New Zealand.

This issue has divided our nation. Few people in Australia condone the cruelty which is occurring, however many people's livelihoods have inadvertently been built on these barbaric practices. If this Government was really governing for the people of Australia they would prioritise resources to be spent in supporting the Australian meat processing industry and abolish the Live Export industry permanently. Australia's major meat processors have confirmed that they can, right now, process all cattle and sheep which are currently exported live. When live exports first started there was a huge loss of Australian jobs and many of the smaller communities which built their livelihoods around meat processing were severely impacted. Stopping live exports would provide huge benefits to rural Australia.

Money from the general public has been funding the MLA for many years. This is a gross misuse, by this government and previous governments, of public monies. In other words the general public has been funding a campaign of sustained and extreme cruelty. Farmers, whilst caught between ethical issues and livelihood, have also been duped, believing that the animals that they have reared and cared for are being treated in a humane manner. The MLA has grown fat and rich on suffering and cruelty. It has shown complete ineptitude and indifference to one of its core purposes and in fact has increased the cruelty with the introduction of the Mark 1

and 2 slaughter boxes. The MLA should be disbanded immediately and its stockpile of financial resources should be redistributed to the farmers and others in the industry to rebuild an Australian industry which is run by Australians for Australians with minimal suffering. Dr Heilbron and Mr Larkins, in their report as far back as 2000, *'Impact of the Live Animal Export Sector on the Australian Meat Processing Industry'* identify that live export competes with Australian processing industry and in fact costs Australians jobs and income.

The current situation where the MLA serves dual roles – that of promoting and supporting a live export industry and that of monitoring welfare issues is clearly a conflict of interests and predictably the welfare part is sacrificed to support the former. Self regulation clearly has not worked in the past and there is no reason to think it will in the future.

There is urgent need for independent opinion and input into all aspects of the beef industry. Professor Temple Grandin – the world leading expert in cattle handling and slaughter condemned outright the manner in which MLA had managed the situation in Indonesia. An independent Animal Welfare body funded by the federal Government should be established to provide accurate and independent advice to Government on animal welfare issues affecting the national interest.

One common argument which has been proposed supporting the continuation of live exports is that there is limited refrigeration in Indonesia. This is a complete furphy and I fail to see that the conditions in another country should force us to support cruel and barbaric practices. However, should this argument be taken seriously Australia provides millions of dollars of funding to Indonesia. Some of this money should be redirected to providing refrigeration and refrigerated transport to the more remote areas. In the Heilbron and Larkins report it was noted that when in 1991 – 2000 the live exports of animals ceased to Saudi Arabia the Saudi Arabians substituted frozen and chilled meat from Australia.

Of further concern is that this Government has condoned the continuation of live export without stipulating the necessity of using stun guns to ensure the animal is unconscious at the point of death. In effect little has changed from previous years. I deplore all live exports but at the very least, if the practice has to continue in the short term, stunning should be compulsory and non negotiable. *(As Albert Einstein said: Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.)*

If these practices were happening to dogs or pet animals (all of whom have an equal sentience to cattle and sheep) the people perpetrating and supporting the practices would be sentenced to jail.

In the long term Australia has no jurisdiction over what happens in Indonesia or any other country and as such we should have the strength to uphold our own culture and ethics and to stop our constant pandering to the demands of other countries.

In conclusion I am calling on this Government to

- Cease the live export of animals forthwith
- Redirect the funding to a sustainable Australian meat processing industry with a carcass only trade outside of Australia
- Establish an independent Australian Animal Welfare Council to provide advice on all national animal welfare matters.

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