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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
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Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir or Madam

Submission in respect of Senate Inquiry into Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's live export market (the Inquiry)

I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the above Senate Inquiry.

In summary, the terms of reference of the inquiry are:

1. To investigate and report on the role and effectiveness of government and various industry bodies in improving animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets, including
 - The level, nature and effectiveness of expenditure and efforts to promote or improve animal welfare in those markets; and
 - The extent of knowledge of animal welfare practices in Australia's live export markets, including formal and informal monitoring, reporting and addressing of poor practices.
2. To investigate and report on the domestic economic impact of the live export trade within Australia.
3. Other related Issues.

In addressing the terms of reference of the Inquiry the following issues are relevant:

1. Animal Welfare in Overseas Markets

- 1.1 The international markets to which Australian livestock is exported and the standards of animal welfare in those markets.
- 1.2 The extent to which Australia has tried to make a difference to animal welfare standards in other countries, and what progress has been made in this regard.
- 1.3 To what extent it is possible to get other countries to adopt animal welfare standards, and to monitor and control the treatment of Australian livestock once it is out of Australia's jurisdiction.



2. Impacts on the Australian Economy

- 2.1 The importance of the live export trade to Australian farmers and workers.
- 2.2 Whether it is possible to replace the live export trade with a processed and packaged meat export trade, and the effect such replacement might have on the Australian economy.

3. Other related Issues

- 3.1 The effect of banning the trade on international markets.
- 3.2 The live export trade and animal welfare.
- 3.3 Public sentiment in Australia about the live export trade.

Animal Welfare in Overseas Markets

The international markets to which Australian livestock is exported and the standards of animal welfare in those markets

Australia sends its livestock to 28 countries for slaughter. Australian sheep are exported primarily to Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Israel, Lebanon, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. Cattle are sent primarily to Indonesia, but also to the Middle East, Turkey, and other parts of South-East Asia.

In Indonesia there are 4,000 slaughter locations. There are no enforceable animal protection laws and although stunning is permitted under the Halal method provided the animal is still alive when killed, in fact 90% of cattle are killed while fully conscious, without prior stunning. The primary methods of slaughter are rope casting the animal to the ground prior to its throat being cut, or using a restraint box (originally introduced into Indonesia by the Australian live export industry), the cruelty of which was graphically illustrated in the recent Four Corners programme. The animals are required to face Mecca when killed, but because they are strong, and frightened, they struggle. To subdue them they are abused and tortured by eye gouging, kicking, and tail twisting and breaking. Tendons are slashed or legs broken. Where blunt knives and incompetent and unskilled slaughterers are employed, the stress, fear and suffering experienced by the animals are even more extreme, but this method of slaughter is always intrinsically inhumane unless the animal is stunned first. For this reason in my view it was unconscionable to reinstate the live export trade to Indonesia without stunning being a pre-condition of reinstatement.

Animals exported to the Middle East face a gruelling sea-voyage to their destination. Evidence from Animals Australia and the RSPCA demonstrates that their treatment upon arrival results in further prolonged suffering, including ultimate slaughter without prior stunning. An investigation into the conditions of live export to Egypt in 2008 led to the suspension of the trade to that country, but footage taken in Bahrain and Kuwait at the festival of Eid al Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) (during which millions of animals are sacrificed as part of religious celebrations) in November 2010 provides evidence that appalling cruelty to Australian sheep continues unabated in other countries¹. Eight countries in the Middle East have been identified as mistreating Australian livestock during the last 8 years.²

¹ Animals Australia report: Australian sheep brutalized during Middle East festival.
http://www.animalsaustralia.org/media/press_releases.php?release=145

² Andrew Wilkie, Live Export Prohibition bill 2011, introductory speech.

- Each slaughterhouse should have a dedicated plan for animal welfare. The purpose of such plan should be to maintain good level of animal welfare at all stages of the handling of animals until they are killed.
- Animals should be transported to slaughter in a way that minimises adverse animal health and welfare outcomes, and the transport should be conducted in accordance with the OIE recommendations for the transportation of animals (Chapters 7.2. and 7.3.).
- Animals should be handled in such a way as to avoid harm, distress or injury. Under no circumstances should animal handlers resort to violent acts to move animals, such as crushing or breaking tails of animals, grasping their eyes or pulling them by the ears. Animal handlers should never apply an injurious object or irritant substance to animals The throwing or dropping of animals, or their lifting or dragging by body parts such as their tail, head, horns, ears, limbs, wool, hair or feathers, should not be permitted.
- Conscious animals should not be thrown, dragged or dropped.

In the 2008 report to Primary Industries Standing Committee of Australia⁷ the following observations are made in the executive summary:

- Livestock restraint is a welfare concern for all forms of animal slaughter;
- Inappropriate restraints such as inverting livestock on their backs is a source of distress in its own right; and
- Livestock should be properly restrained in a comfortable upright position prior to the act of slaughter.

One of the conclusions of the report is that “large animals should be excluded from slaughter without stunning”.⁸

The list of recommendations by the OIE and in the above report is extensive. It is completely unrealistic to expect that somehow under Australia’s influence these guidelines will be adopted and implemented in other countries, even if they are members of the OIE. Indonesia is a member country, but has no code or law to make the OIE guidelines mandatory.

Even the express requirements for Halal slaughter offer little protection in practice. This ritual method requires (amongst other things) that the animal be faced to Mecca, not be killed in the presence of others, not be bound before slaughter, be killed with one swift cut to the throat, causing as little pain as possible, and be treated kindly⁹.

Monitoring and control

It is cynical for Australia to claim credit for implementing animal welfare standards and then not only permit the export of stock to countries where such standards do not apply but provide the wherewithal to continue non-compliant practices, for example by the supply of restraint boxes.

⁷ (2008) Adams, D.B and Sheridan, A.D “Risks to Animal Welfare associated with livestock slaughter without induced insensibility”, Executive summary p. x http://www.daff.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/1370332/animal-welfare-livestock-slaughter.pdf

⁸ Ibid, p.xvii

⁹ (2007) The Victorian Bar Association “At a glance: the case against live sheep exports”.

more to the Australian economy than one exported live, due to the capacity to add value in Australia. Other key findings of the 2009 ACIL Tasman report were:

- The value of live sheep exports to farmers and the economy is very small compared to other rural commodities;
- Now is the time to signal a phase out of live sheep exports because the industry is already undergoing major structural reform;
- Farmers are already moving away from live sheep exports and into more profitable areas such as prime lamb and cropping;
- On mixed farming businesses there are many uses for sheep and the transition for farmers from live sheep to sheep meat is relatively simple;
- Phasing out live sheep exports won't affect the price of lamb or mutton in the long-term; and
- The farm-level adjustments required to phase out live sheep exports would not be extensive compared to changes already underway in the industry.

A second report from ACIL Tasman entitled *Economic analysis of Australian live sheep and sheep meat trade* was released later. This report proposed a number of strategies for increasing sheep meat export, including:

- Promotional campaigns to drive demand for Australian beef and lamb in Australia's major export markets;
- The Australian government could potentially replicate New Zealand's policy efforts to increase its access to the EU market. New Zealand's duty free quota for sheep meat is by far the largest in the EU; and
- Improvements in competitiveness through more efficient use of water and energy, maximising the recovery of saleable meat and edible offal, improving working conditions, increasing reproductive rates and decreasing mortality rates, reducing age at sale and lowering the costs of production.

The pastoralist industry has grown in the north to exploit the opportunity of exporting cattle from marginal rangelands to be fattened at their destination. As the producers expanded and changed their stock to breeds that meet the demand of the overseas buyers (*bos indicus* rather than *bos taurus*), the local processing industry was choked of the supply of animals for slaughter to sustain the abattoirs and downstream processing industries. So, now we have a situation where the local abattoir industry has shrunk¹⁵, and in the north, disappeared altogether. Farmers and pastoralists have not diversified and are completely vulnerable to the export market. Ironically, they are in the same situation now that they were decades ago when the power of the unionised workforce in the meatworks industry controlled what farmers were paid for their animals, leaving them little option to sell their livestock elsewhere. The live exports industry may have been attractive at first as competition for local abattoirs, but it has failed to deliver a sustainable and diversified market for livestock.

¹⁵ (2010) Environment and Public Affairs Committee: Report on Meat Industry, Inquiry into the shortage of abattoir capacity in Western Australia.

The live export trade and animal welfare

Being vulnerable to the export markets not only causes loss of revenue to exporters but also great distress for the animals. For example²⁰, in 1990:

- the Mawashi Al Gasseem was forced to stay on the water for 16 weeks before a country would accept those of its sheep that remained alive; and
- many Australian shipments to Saudi Arabia were rejected due to claims of scabby mouth and other diseases. Death rates soared as animals waited on board ships languishing outside ports or en route to alternative destinations.

The incidents of cruelty, suffering and death for cattle, sheep and goats from starvation, gastroenteritis, pneumonia, suffocation and crush injuries, and trauma from cruel handling are too many to innumerate. Some examples include:

- in 2010, 295 cattle died of pneumonia and heat stress in the Ocean Shearer en route to Egypt;
- in 2002, on MV Becrux, 880 of 1,195 cattle and 1,400 out of 60,000 sheep died when the vessel met extreme temperatures of heat and humidity in the Arabian Gulf. The remaining animals were rejected by Saudi Arabia and had to remain on board until another buyer was found to accept them;
- In 1999, on the Temburong 829 cattle suffocated when the ventilation failed.

Since 2006 AQIS²¹ has produced reports on high mortality voyages and these are now publicly available. There are 38 reports – triggered when a sheep shipment exceeds a death rate of 2%, and when a cattle shipment death rate exceeds 1% for long voyages (10 days or more) or 0.5% for shorter voyages.

Public sentiment in Australia about the live export trade

Animal Welfare is an issue that affects every Australian. A national Galaxy poll²² conducted in October 2010 found that 79 % of Australians believe that the live export trade is inhumane and should be phased out and eventually banned. Clearly this view crosses political boundaries and supports the allowance of a conscience vote in relation to the 2 bills²³ that will come before federal parliament in the near future.

Conclusion

The Greens believe that the existing trade could be successfully replaced with an already established and halal-accredited chilled and frozen carcass industry. Animals could then be slaughtered within Australia under animal welfare provisions. A local halal-accredited chilled meat trade would also benefit the local economy and create jobs within the economy. We believe our farmers, and our economy would be better off if we ensured any animal produce sent overseas was produced locally,

²⁰ <http://www.liveexport-indefensible.com/facts/litany.php>

²¹ <http://www.daff.gov.au/aqis/export/live-animals/livestock/aqis-mortality-investigations>.

²² 14: Galaxy poll, Live export 2010 "Main Findings", page 5

²³ The Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011 and the Live Export Prohibition Bill 2011