

## SUBMISSION

I make this submission in support of the Australian live export industry for consideration in the 'Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets' Senate Inquiry being conducted by the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee.

I refer directly to the Terms of Reference that the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee will inquire and report on and my opinion in relation to each Term of Reference is as follows:-

**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.

The role and effectiveness of the Australian Government in the handling of the recent live export issues is nothing short of deplorable. To suspend a \$1 billion dollar a year trade based on the footage screened on a half hour current affairs program is unethical, immoral and unconstitutional. Further, given that this footage was screened on the ABC, a Government owned television station, **it is my recommendation that the ABC also be thoroughly investigated for its biased reporting.**

Firstly, with respect to the Terms of Reference 1. a. ii. iii. animal welfare in live export market countries is not our responsibility in the first instance. The fact that we have taken to investing millions of dollars on animal welfare in these countries is a credit of the highest order. No other country in the world, or industry for that matter, makes an investment of such a large scale in a customer's market.

The level, nature and effectiveness of expenditure and efforts to promote or improve animal welfare standards, ongoing monitoring of the subscription to, and practise of, animal welfare standards, and the actions to improve animal welfare outcomes by the Australian red meat industry, in Australia's live export market countries is above and beyond any other in the world.

Secondly, and in regards to ii) ongoing monitoring of the subscription to, and practise of, animal welfare standards in all live export market countries, is being addressed. MLA has a constant presence in our overseas red meat markets and is doing everything they can to ensure that the facilities killing Australian animals are up to OIE standards. It must be

understood that this requires an altering of another countries religious beliefs, long term practices, and culture, not something that can be achieved overnight.

I do not believe for one minute that MLA or Livecorp are responsible or to blame for any of the footage aired. The level of investment made by the Australian red meat producers, through their MLA levies, into animal welfare and best practice in Indonesia, is to be applauded and is a credit to them. No other country in the world invests in an overseas market to this level. I would also recommend seeking information, pictures, video footage, and other evidence from Indonesia from 10 years ago and comparing it to the industry there today.

It is unjust and unfair for the Australian Government to paint the entire slaughter market in Indonesia with the same brush and make such a rash decision as to suspend the live trade. There is extensive evidence that, as with any industry in the world, the greatest percentage of stakeholders are doing the right thing and maintaining world's best practice. Why then does the entire northern beef industry and the majority of the Indonesian import beef supply chain have to suffer at the hands of a minority of rogue operators.

My recommendation is that these rogue operators be identified, trade suspended to them alone, and an effort made to improve the practices within these facilities as soon as possible to allow them to again accept Australian beef.

The Australian Meat Industry Council ought to be ashamed of their stance on this issue, as they have betrayed the very industry with which they require to survive. Basic economics confirms that the more products on offer in a marketplace, the lower a price will be. Insert 700,000 more cattle into the domestic market and beef prices will drop overnight. The flow on effects of this will include less money made by domestic meatworks and therefore less jobs in these meatworks.

Finally, **it is my firm belief that the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Joe Ludwig**, is no longer fit to serve this industry. As the one person in Australia who has the ability to stand up for the industry he represents at the highest level, he has done nothing but betrayed it. As a lifelong member of the agriculture industry, I do not and will not support his appointment. I firmly believe that given his appalling misjudgement in this instance, and subsequent handling of the issue in the aftermath of his decision, particularly when attempting to resolve the matter 'with industry', that he **be removed from office immediately**.

**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.

When a car salesman sells a car he does not first ask if the car will be stored in a full lock up garage with a roller door and temperature control, or on the front lawn, he simply presents the

best product available to the market place and takes the highest price he can for it. Similarly, when a beef producer presents an animal to the market, he presents it in the healthiest, best condition he can so as to attain the highest price.

Having said this, I don't condone animal cruelty and I do believe that an animal is different to a car and deserves a humane existence. I do believe we have a moral responsibility to ensure the highest of animal welfare standards throughout that animal's life and an accountability to ensure this is adhered too. Again, I credit MLA and Livecorp for the investments and improvements it has made to animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets.

The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock address the formal and informal monitoring and reporting processes that extend only as far as the point of disembarkation in the country being exported too. To this extent we maintain world's best practice. It is evident that beyond that point there is still work to be done and most immediately at the point of slaughter.

My recommendation is that the NLIS system be incorporated into the Australian owned processing facilities in Indonesia and used as a model to educate our customers with. This system can be and is being used for far more than traceability and could easily accommodate the animal welfare reporting and monitoring required.

**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.

**2.a) Impact on regional and remote employment especially in northern Australia.**

The stewards of the land who make up the northern beef industry account for millions of acres of Australia's land mass, a land mass that is vastly unusable for any other production. To remove the live export industry that the northern beef industry is so reliant on would be to decimate local communities, regions and almost the Northern Territory economy.

The Australian Government has invested millions in the Indigenous communities across northern Australia and created hundreds of jobs for those people in the beef industry by reviving cattle enterprises that they have been deeded. By closing the live export trade you are destroying these people's livelihoods and their communities and hence disposing of the millions of dollars already invested in these initiatives.

Regional and remote employment also extends well beyond simply the beef producers. The service industry that supports the beef industry includes helicopter pilots, truck drivers, vets, nutritionists, stockmen and women, fuel distributors, as well as a myriad of other service providers that exist in local communities.

b) Impact and role of the industry on local livestock production and prices.

The live export industry is what sustains the floor in the market in the Australian beef industry. To inject another 700,000 head of cattle into the domestic market would invariably flood the market and cause beef prices to crash overnight. This would be caused by a completely uncompetitive market place whereby the wholesalers who purchase beef domestically could source as much beef as they like at the cheapest price.

Furthermore, and as a result, the livelihoods of beef producers in remote areas would be seriously jeopardised given the economics of transporting cattle from their stations to their closest markets. The lack of abattoirs north of the Townsville to Perth line is one of the greatest constraints on the northern beef industry.

For those fortunate enough to have ready access to both the live export and domestic beef markets, the live export industry provides a choice in their market and an ability to accept the best price from wherever it comes. Without competition, prices will fall.

c) Impact on the processing of live stock within Australia.

As a result of the points raised in b), the Australian processing industry would also suffer greatly as less value in beef being processed reduces profits in the domestic processing sector which leads to less staff and fewer jobs.

### **3. Other related matters.**

Other related matters such as mental health are a great concern for the beef industry at present. People such as the Ranacher's from Bullo River and Nico Botha from Moola Bulla are in dire straits. Their lives depend on the live export industry and the income they derive from it. The animal welfare of those animals left here will subsequently be brought into jeopardy. As Mr Botha explained, with no market for his export heifers, he would be forced to hold them over until another market is found, hence causing overstocking on his property whereby the older cows would suffer first. Shooting these cattle in vast numbers is not out of the question if feed supplies are greatly reduced.

If countries such as Indonesia are to source their beef from elsewhere it presents a greater risk to Australia of a disease outbreak. If FMD or BSE affected beef hits Indonesia it greatly increases the risk of such a disease reaching Australian shores.

In conclusion, I support and am a part of the northern beef industry and its live export market. I endorse the work of organisations such as MLA and Livecorp and their continued efforts in Indonesia and other countries around the world. I condemn the actions of the current government and particularly the Minister for Agriculture Mr Joe Ludwig and call for his immediate removal from the Agriculture portfolio, our industry needs someone who will support us in tough times, not betray us.

Signed:	Mr Stuart RL Austin
Address:	
Date:	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2011