

Submission to the Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Rat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

As a concerned Australian citizen I would like to thank you for organising this inquiry.

I have read through the terms of reference and wholeheartedly support this inquiry to uncover the facts behind the animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets.

I would also be grateful if your inquiry could also address the following concerns:

Australia's livestock export trade also includes sheep, goats and cattle to the Middle East area and other developing countries. There have been a number of investigations by animal welfare agencies over the past few years, highlighting in particular, the horrendous treatment of sheep exported to the Middle East. I have watched this footage and have read many accounts of inhumane practices and conditions en-route and during processing. I would therefore like to know what has been done to date by industry and government regarding these appalling issues.

I note the livestock export industry is self-regulated. Surely, this is a clear conflict of interest. This is a major risk and it is essential that robust animal welfare safeguards be put in place immediately. These safeguards must be totally independent from industry. This should be a mandatory requirement for any industry that trades animals for profit.

I have recently read reports and articles stating there have been many occasions over the years when the livestock export industry could have chosen to improve animal welfare standards, but they decided it was not profitable to do so.

If the livestock export trade is to continue, the Australian public needs assurance the industry is independently regulated. The key not-for-profit Australian animal welfare agencies such as RSPCA and Animals Australia need to be consulted and/or involved in all stages in the process. Instead of the Federal Government providing dollar for dollar matching arrangements with MLA for various areas of operation, this money should go towards funding independent and appropriately trained animal welfare

officers. I would particularly like to know what portion of the tax payers funding goes towards supporting this industry.

I hope your inquiry also uncovers the reasons why the current and previous agricultural Ministers who have had the livestock export trade under their portfolios, have systematically ignored animal welfare issues over the years.

If the majority of the Australian public is to find the livestock export trade acceptable in any form in the future, there needs to be total reform. It is clear the current conflicts of interest and operating methods of this industry have proven disastrous for animal welfare, the industry and the public's perception of government.

I am also interested in the facts around how many Australian jobs have been lost since this industry began. I would also like to know how many current jobs in the industry would be retained if we move towards phasing out the livestock export trade and moving to the chilled meat export trade.

I have followed all the arguments for and against the livestock export trade over the past few weeks and personally find this trade completely indefensible. I totally support replacing the livestock export trade with the chilled meat export trade, in a carefully considered and appropriate manner for all concerned.

The real facts of the livestock export industry must be uncovered and made transparent to the public. If this industry is to continue, any actual changes and/or improvements must be measurable and shown to clearly resolve the animal welfare issues and concerns of the Australian people.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Suzanne Dixon