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The following constitutes my submission to the enquiry into Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport by the Senate on 16 June 2011.

For most of my adult life I have lived and worked on both sides of the continent in Northern Australia. In making my submission I draw on nearly forty years of experience in a variety of roles; including working in the mining industry, as a soldier and as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia. I am not a member of, nor do I hold any positions in, any organisations or groups associated with the trade. I do not, nor does any of my direct family, have any pecuniary interest (direct or otherwise) in any companies, firms or businesses associated with this matter.

To date, the submissions I have seen are mainly based on form letters for activist groups; most are largely lacking any meaningful substance and simply express opinions and reiterate one position or another.

I express my concern at the short notice given and the time allocated for the enquiry. Equally important is the timing of this enquiry. This is probably the most important issue confronting the industry and it is patently unfair that this process is taking place during this time of crisis and at the busiest time of the year for the industry participants. Clearly this is unacceptable and reduces the ability of the industry to have any input.

What is at risk is an Australia wide industry. It is an industry that straddles remote and regional Australia and has helped form the very character and soul of our national identity. For a matter of this magnitude and with such far-reaching consequences I submit that a full enquiry, including time for extensive and thoroughly researched submissions AND a comprehensive set of remote and regional hearings would better serve the Senate and the Nation. Such steps should be considered a necessity for a Committee such as this and I am certain that any decisions taken by the Senate would benefit enormously from such an exercise. That process would be further enhanced if the Committee further recommended:

1. Deferring input and deliberation on the matter until such time as the industry participants are in a position to have meaningful input; or more preferably
2. That the Bills be rejected,

As a prelude to my submission it is interesting to note:

- That the Greens (who have become the champions of this legislation) received a total of 13.1% of the vote at the last election. With 86.9% of the population not giving them their primary vote, they cannot be seriously considered as a mainstream political force and their views should be discounted proportionately.
- In what I suspect is an unprecedented move, the export ban and subsequent proposals for permanent legislation were made in response to a Television show.
- The group, Animals Australia, is pushing an extreme animal liberation agenda that does not meet mainstream opinions, expectations and lifestyles
- I have been unable to find another industry that has been banned for such reasons, in similar circumstances and at such short notice. To put that into perspective – sadly, the killer asbestos industry closed for economic purposes and no Government saw fit to close it.
- Most of the opposition to the export trade comes from inner city and suburban areas and people. Conversely most of the support for the trade comes from country folk.

The Committee can easily ascertain the simple dollar and employment value of the trade so I will not take up your time with the many and various estimates that are available.

This industry is of minor economic consequence to the suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney, however, its value to Northern Australia cannot be overestimated. In much of Northern Australia the pastoral industry is the wealth generating industry that underpins the economy of each region. In many cases it is the ONLY employment for local people, including the many aboriginal owned and operated stations.

The live stock export industry is an extremely sophisticated one with links into many countries. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website file://localhost/http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/export-trade/cattle_and_sheep/export_destinations) provides the following information with regard to the destinations of our exports:

“Sheep

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, territories administered by Palestine, Ukraine, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Brunei, China, Japan, USA, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and the Philippines.

Feeder cattle

Qatar, Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, territories administered by Palestine, Mauritius, Kuwait, Mexico, China, India, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia*, Malaysia, Brunei, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, and the USA.

Breeding cattle

Israel, Kuwait, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, India, Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Brunei, New Caledonia, USA, and Mexico.”

It would be an extraordinary and unprecedented move if this industry was simply closed; either immediately as required under the Live Animals Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill (2011) introduced by Senator Siewart; or in three years as anticipated in the alternative Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill (2011) introduced by Wilkie MHR.

Both pieces of legislation are radical interventions in the internal affairs of other countries. Imagine the outrage if any one of these recipient countries passed internal laws that restricted/alterd or amended our actions, behaviours or industrial standards? We would not accept it; the public outcry would demand we exercised our sovereign rights to govern our own country as we see fit. Of course that principle is deviated from when we sign and ratify binding, legal international treaties or agreements. In short we reserve unto ourselves our right to make our own laws to our own standards. That sovereign right exists in our trading partners' countries also.

The only legal, sensible and sustainable ways to change behaviour in another country are through the long and exhaustive process of negotiations leading to bilateral agreements. That sometimes-torturous process is (and has been for some time) underway between ourselves, Indonesia and other countries where we have concerns over animal welfare.

When examining these issues; please keep in mind that the entire live stock industry exists to provide food for human beings. The nice pictures of lovely spring lambs and newborn calves frolicking in green pastures are beautiful but misleading. Stock is born, bred, raised, transported and killed to provide food; however we still have the right to expect that animals be treated humanely prior to being slaughtered. To this end there has been a number of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) signed between Australia and the various receptor countries. Each of these MOU is aimed at improving animal welfare outcomes for live stock. That process is ongoing

There is much research to show that many people find the images of slaughterhouses and animals being killed for food disturbing. Many people may choose not to eat meat as a result of seeing those images. Also, many other people simply choose not to eat meat. As I would not seek to impose my carnivorian views on those people; I do not accept that they have the right to impose their vegetarian views onto myself or other carnivores. Whether those carnivores are located in this country, or any other, is irrelevant to the principle.

The major protagonist in this issue is Animals Australia. Animals Australia is a well-funded body that holds views that are not in line with accepted community standards. Most people do not support mistreatment of, or cruelty to, animals but the expressed views of Animals Australia fall well outside the norms of society. Consider the following taken from their website at:

(http://www.animalsaustralia.org/factsheets/animal_exploitation.php)

“Non-human animals are exploited and abused in many ways, including:

- raising them for food and clothing;
- in entertainments such as rodeos and circuses;
- the killing of native and introduced animals;
- testing medicines, cosmetics and household products and in scientific experiments of many kinds;
- when companion animals are abused or neglected.

Animals are often regarded as commodities, and their well-being is considered important only insofar as it effects productivity and profit. But they are sentient beings, and they require greater consideration.”

I doubt that many people in this country would consider that raising animals as food is something Australians would be overly concerned about. A statement such as this one should only serve one purpose and that would be to alert decision makers to the fundamentalist nature of this organisation.

There is a view being perpetrated that the live stock industry played some role in the demise of the slaughtering and processing industry in Northern Australia. Nothing could be further from the truth. For many years the Northern cattle industry survived by being ahead of the game and exporting slaughtered and chilled beef by air, predominantly to the UK. This industry operated from around 1949 until around the time that the beef roads were constructed in the late fifties and early sixties. Many abattoirs continued in business until the seasonal nature of the work and distance from domestic markets caused them to close. This in turn caused the Northern pastoral industry to stagnate.

It was the introduction of the live stock export industry that rejuvenated and reinvigorated that Northern Pastoral Industry. However the major reasons for the light integration between the northern live stock industry and existing Australian abattoirs and consumers are:

- Cattle type suited to the north do not produce meat palatable to the southern meat consumers.
- The distance from the domestic markets and the associated high transport costs
- The limited and seasonal nature of the work in the industry
- Shortage of industry infrastructure
- High costs of operating abattoirs

Regardless of the future of the live stock export trade, all of these entrenched and problematical issues confronting the northern industry remain; consequently, any benefits that flow to the southern domestic slaughter businesses will be minimal.

The rather naive suggestion that the slaughter industry can be reinstated in the North completely ignores the fact that all the problems that previously caused the industry to fail are still in existence. Transporting the northern stock south to existing abattoirs is also economic nonsense. The only possible ways for this to become viable are for the transport of Northern live stock to be excluded from the effects of the impending carbon tax and for major government assistance to be provided in the form of large and ongoing subsidies to the transport industry. In a free trading economy like ours, I cannot imagine why any government would do such a thing.

For the “proposals” to re-establish the northern industry to be given any serious weight or standing; the advocates need to produce some evidence and comprehensive business cases that support their theory that Australian Slaughtering is a viable option. To date apart from rhetoric, nothing substantial has been forthcoming. Unless and until such hard evidence is available the claims that slaughtering can be done as a replacement for the live stock export industry should be regarded as unsubstantiated allegations, or ambit claims, and not be treated as matters of substance.

These Bills were produced as a result of a TV show. The insidious effects of the short-term ban on Northern Australia have not yet been fully understood in Canberra. Had they been, there would never have been a blanket ban imposed in the first instance. The effect of seasons and the small window of opportunity for the movement of stock were completely overlooked in Canberra. The effect of the ban on the breeding cycle of stock was similarly overlooked. Tragically, the deleterious effects on the shipping industry, stockyards, feedlots and small towns were never given any real or meaningful consideration in the decision making process. The interlocked questions of sovereign risk and possible damage to Australia’s international trade reputation were similarly not given any real and detailed examination prior to the ban being imposed.

That the ban was implemented demonstrates a certain level of political ineptitude on behalf of the Minister. The Minister and the ALP Caucus showed a complete inability to sort the “political chatter” and “e-noise” from the real issue of improved animal welfare. The preparedness of the Minister to trade the national interest, and the interests of the Northern half of this country, to curry some sort of political favour is nothing short of a scandal. The disproportionate government response of the ban, and related moves to stop this trade entirely, far outweigh any meaningful assessment of the problem.

In effect, the government accepted the moral standards of an extreme group, adopted their view as policy and excluded other input. The Government then acted in accord with that extreme agenda and shifted the cost of their moralistic decisions onto the industry. Any sort of balanced, proper and thorough Ministerial process would have produced an entirely different outcome for the industry, the nation and, perversely, would have produced better animal welfare outcomes.

It is clear that the Minister and the Government did not, and still do not, understand that there is no solution that will permanently appease the animal liberationists; I reiterate that this is a group that considers raising animals for food as being exploitation and abuse. If the live export trade is stopped immediately and permanently, this group will not stop its campaigns. The fishing industry is already in their sights as is signalled in the following, which has been taken from the website at:

[file://localhost/\(http://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/fishing.php\)](file://localhost/(http://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/fishing.php))

“Fishing is considered a recreational past-time among most Australians and Australia has a large commercial fishing fleet. Any animal protection group that raises the issue of fish welfare in this country is instantly derided.

Having to acknowledge that **fish feel pain and distress** is not something that those who enjoy fishing, or those whose income is generated through fishing, want to know about.

As an animal protection organisation, Animals Australia’s role is to present facts that will allow the community to make informed choices—whether they be fishermen (or women) or those who eat fish—knowing that many members of the community if informed, will make personal choices that don’t cause harm to others.

Therefore, the fact that fish feel pain and distress is just another inconvenient truth that needs to be told.”

Clearly their aim is to firstly ban live stock exports and then to target the fishing industry.

The animal liberationists argue that because the current system cannot guarantee the safety and well being of animals exported; the live stock export trade should be permanently stopped. That is flawed thinking and the reasoning is just plain nonsense. Consider this: It is a given that Australia cannot guarantee the safety of its citizens travelling overseas. It is simply not possible to achieve this outcome. Our governmental systems can, and do, advise citizens of when and where to travel; but the government cannot guarantee safety. So, using the nonsensical logic of the liberationists – we would ban overseas travel for citizens. If an absolute guarantee cannot be given for humans travelling – why should it be a necessary pre-requisite for live stock? Clearly the argument put forward by the liberationists is nonsense. The same can be said of the link that is being made between being unable to make an absolute guarantee and the total removal of the trade.

Time does not permit detailed examination of the many other issues that could be used to further obviate any perceived need for either of these Bills to be passed. Some of these issues are:

- The need for the 230+ million people in Indonesia to have access to quality, cheap, disease free and secure supplies of food.

- The Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries advice that in the live stock export trade animal “mortality rates have fallen in recent years”. <file://localhost/http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/export-trade>
- Any informed view of international animal welfare shows clearly that Australia is having a marked effect in raising animal welfare standards in a global industry.
- Any objective assessment of the live stock trade should be based on whether standards in market countries are deteriorating or improving. I suggest there is no evidence to show deterioration and there is a plethora of data showing the reverse is the case.
- Much is made of the race and religion of the countries that receive our live stock. I suspect much of this view is based on an old-fashioned white supremacist view of the world. Cruelty is not a product of any race religion or colour. Cruelty can be reduced or removed through education, training, raising awareness and improving standards.

In this instance, a group holding extremist views has successfully painted the exception as being the norm. A national TV show has then put to air pictures that visually confirm the exception; our Government has fallen for this well organised and extremely well presented, but grossly inaccurate, case and responded with a knee jerk ban. City based Independent and Green MP’s then rushed to show how pure they are by moving these bills.

Legislation should only be passed when a pressing need exists for it AND when it is in the National Interest. In this case, apart from panic, there is no justifiable reason for the Australian Parliament to continue the knee jerk reaction and pass these bills. To do so is to punish the producers, transporters and abattoirs that operate at or above set standards; and to disadvantage all those who depend on this industry for their financial welfare and food.

These Bills are clearly and demonstrably contrary to the national interest and as such should not be passed. It is my strongly held view that this Committee should report such a recommendation to the Senate.