

Mr Tony Phillips

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

Submission to the Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets

It is abundantly clear that there are many serious issues with the live animal trade to overseas markets. The most recent exposure of the brutal and horrendous treatment cattle suffer in Indonesian abattoirs is proof of that. There have been many more investigations and exposures made in the past, which also caused outrage and disbelief that Australian industries could allow this to happen, and allow to continue. Cruelty is cruelty, and there is no excusing it for anything, especially not money or religion.

Clearly Meat and Livestock Australia and LiveCorp have been negligent in their management of the issues in Indonesian abattoirs, along with other countries Australia exports to that have little regard for animal welfare. These organisations have also been negligent in their general management as representatives of the industry. For MLA and LiveCorp to deny any knowledge of the animal welfare issues is laughable, especially when we have information available to us to refute this statement. Firstly, we have access to the report they released in May 2010, which sparked the joint investigation and reporting by Animals Australia and the RSPCA due to the findings contained in that report.

The Mark 1 boxes were also provided by MLA/LiveCorp to assist with the slaughtering process in Indonesia. This "solution" was implemented directly as a result of an issue with the quality of meat from Australian animals, which one can deduce was there were quality issues due to the very poor practises of handling and slaughtering by the Indonesians. This has been a period of at least 10 years that these have been in operation. For these bodies to also conduct training demonstrates that they also knew of poor handling and slaughtering practises, otherwise they would not have bothered.

MLA's admission that they were aware of the appalling practices occurring in Indonesia abattoirs raises serious questions about their management of this issue.

It can be fair to say that many producers have also known of these welfare issues but also turned a blind eye to the cruelty. I recently read an article from 2008 by producer acknowledging they knew of animal welfare issues in other countries, but wiping their hands of any responsibility saying it was not in their control. I would think there is some control, by making a decision not to send their animals to places where they know they will suffer a slow and cruel death. If this producer knew in

2008, one could comfortably think that the industry bodies, MLA and LiveCorp, would have been fully aware.

These industry bodies have taken far too long to implement any worthy changes to benefit Australian animal's welfare. The changes that have been introduced in Indonesia only work to enforce the cruel methods the Indonesians utilise. The tripping method the Indonesians use to make the cattle fall over onto their sides is the least humane way of slaughtering and causes the most stress to the animals. It isn't any wonder there have been issues of meat quality when the animals are so stressed and terrified. Tripping has been condemned by Dr Temple Grandin, the world leader in animal welfare. She also stated that Australia should never provide such equipment.

Sending animals to countries such as Indonesia and to the Middle East means these animals will never be protected and are at the mercy of their cruel practices. No stunning, slaughtering animals whilst fully conscious, dying a slow and agonising death and probably being tortured in the process. The MLA fully acknowledges this fact, having made a statement to the media that they, "the livestock industry and government do not have the power to enact legislated animal welfare standards in Indonesia," all they can do is provide training and education. We have seen that this training and education has done very little if anything to protect these defenseless animals.

It is interesting to see that MLA have also stated that there has been progress with the implementation of stunning when in their report it was stated that the implementation of stunning did not seem feasible for a number of reasons. They have also stated that they have a team working to improve standards at "25 best facilities processing Australian cattle". Again, this is very interesting considering Chairman Don Heatley admitted that there are only 5 abattoirs that currently meet standards, with another 5 possibly being brought up to standard by the year's end and the remaining requiring severe work and did not specify a timeframe. This does not add up to 25.

The MLA and LiveCorp have shown that they cannot be trusted, they should not be given a second chance as they have had far too long to prove themselves.

There are also issues with the transportation of animals on ships, in spite of claims that 99% of animals arrive safely at their destination, this is questionable considering statements that documentation is regularly falsified. The amount of stress these animals would suffer on these long and arduous journeys is not measurable.

It is necessary to stop the live animal exports, and to implement and re-establish facilities in Australia to process our cattle and sheep here. There is proof that this could work, that countries who normally import our animals alive would accept processed meat in its place. This occurred when a ban was in place with Egypt, and Indonesia just recently increased its processed meat imports from 50,000 tonnes to 90,000 tonnes. This would also benefit our economy and employment, re-establishing the dying meat processing trade.

I support the end of live animal exports as based purely on animal welfare considerations, it should stop. There should be no question about it.

Yours sincerely
Tony Phillips