

Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport

Committee Members

If the Federal Government, which includes the Greens and some Independents along with their vocal but otherwise minority lobby groups the RSPCA and Animals Australia, think that they have, by their knee-jerk and ill thought through actions emanating from a very selective and not representative video clip, “had a win” over the live export of animals trade by attempting to shut it down, then I would ask at what cost to the Australian livestock industry and all associated businesses and livelihoods in that industry? An industry that should not and will not be shut down permanently.

No one condones the images of animal cruelty that were aired, but if a balanced argument was put it would undoubtedly show that livestock industry bodies along with Federal agencies have made huge inroads into the welfare (transport, housing and slaughter) of animals subject to live export. A slow process given the economic, religious and social circumstances that exist in countries that receive our livestock, but nonetheless a vastly improving situation; a situation that receives both industry and Government funding.

Mention was made earlier about the cost of closing this industry down. Not only would there be an unestimatable economic downturn within the regional and rural economies, there would also be a very damaging and long lasting social consequence for these communities, and more specifically the indigenous peoples of Northern Australia who rely on the rangeland cattle properties for employment, thus food and housing in an environment that they can relate to, and not the suburban fringe-dwelling social welfare trap that they would be exposed to.

The employment chain in the sheep industry is long and varied, and the links that it has to rural communities is widespread. From the producer to the processor to the retailer and much employment in between (farm laborers, truckies, stock agents, yardmen, slaughtermen, butchers and their families to name a few) any more reduction of sheep numbers as a consequence of shutting down live exports would undoubtedly have serious ramifications for that industry and its associated businesses. Rural communities are struggling with their relevance and existence now; they do not need an industry that employs a significant number of people both directly and indirectly to be jeopardised.

David Beard

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