

# Senate Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee

## Questions on Notice – Tuesday, 20 September 2011 CANBERRA

### Inquiry into animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Page No's.</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>Question asked by</b>	<b>Answered</b>
1	5	MLA	Senator Siewert	5/10/11
2	8	MLA	Senator Xenophon	5/10/11
3	9	MLA	Senator Xenophon	5/10/11
4	10-11	MLA	Senator Edwards	5/10/11
5	12	MLA	Senator Thistlethwaite	5/10/11
6	13	MLA	Senator Thistlethwaite	5/10/11
7	13	MLA	Senator Adams	5/10/11



**SENATE RURAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT  
REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**Inquiry into animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets**

**Public Hearing Tuesday, 20 September 2011**

**Questions Taken on Notice – Meat & Livestock Australia**

---

**1. HANSARD, PG 5**

---

**Senator SIEWERT:** I want to go back to the question that Senator Sterle asked about: talking to the abattoirs. You may need to take some of these questions on notice. I formed an understanding on this issue from the discussion we had here last week with the ABC. I understood the discussion was around a fairly recent conversation—and I did not take it that it was a visit; I took it that it was a conversation; it could have been a visit or a conversation, I do not know. So, in the recent past, there had been a conversation, not necessarily part of your ongoing program of discussion with abattoirs. So what I would like to know is: for that particular example, of that abattoir and other abattoirs, had MLA been in recent contact with them about any Animals Australia filming, any *Four Corners* filming or any other possibility of somebody filming? We now know that the local activists have also got similar film, taken subsequently, as I understand it.

**Mr Hansen:** I would have to take that on notice.

---

**2. HANSARD, PG 8**

---

**Dr Barnard:** We had a specific project on it over the last 18 months, increasing the amount of stunning in Indonesia. As I said, that involved a couple of steps. It involved getting the support of religious authorities. We got one of the religious authorities to make a video supporting the practice. It involved looking at regulations in Indonesia to import stunning equipment. There are two types of stunning equipment; one involves pneumatics, but the easier equipment to use—and the cheaper equipment—uses explosives. So there were issues that we had to look at in importing that equipment into Indonesia. That was the second significant step in the project.

A third significant step was to demonstrate the practice in a couple of abattoirs. Of course, there have always been some abattoirs in Indonesia that have stunned. The Elders plant is an example of that. But there was a significant number of secondary plants where we were specifically aiming to increase their adoption of stunning.

**Senator XENOPHON:** Perhaps on notice you could give an idea for the last 18 months of what the resources were that were allocated to that? Specific resources would be useful.

**Dr Barnard:** Sure.

---

### 3. HANSARD, PG 9

---

**Senator XENOPHON:** You may want to take this on notice: how do you react to the information you have about the transport and distribution of animals in Saudi Arabia and the preslaughtering restraint in that country—the slaughter processes in Saudi Arabia?

And my final issue—given time constraints—is how does MLA determine the acceptability of new markets or criteria for those new markets that you are looking at opening up in the context of animal welfare outcomes?

**Mr Hansen:** Taking it on notice specifically about Saudi Arabia, I must say that one of the challenges with a country like Saudi Arabia is the difficulty of access to all the facilities that we would be looking to access. We can take that on notice and come back to you on that.

---

### 4. HANSARD, PG 10-11

---

**Senator EDWARDS:** Thank you, gentlemen. When did the minister know of the problems in Indonesia and address them with you folk at MLA?

**Mr Hansen:** We are certainly aware that the minister wrote to, I believe, the Australian Livestock Exporters Council, ALEC, and LiveCorp in January this year in relation to sheep in Kuwait and livestock export issues generally. We did not receive any correspondence on that matter, as you would expect us not to, given the fact that livestock export issues are primarily the domain of both the live exporters themselves, represented by their peak council and their service body, LiveCorp. So I am not aware of what time, post that, that any issues regarding Indonesia were raised with MLA. I would have to take that on notice.

**Senator EDWARDS:** Did the minister raise anything at all with MLA around the time of the ban?

**Mr Hansen:** Around the time of the ban, again, without those who were present in those discussions, I would have to take it on notice, Senator.

**Senator EDWARDS:** It is a fairly significant issue. You would know whether the federal minister for agriculture rang you about it, though.

**Mr Hansen:** And I am sure the person who would have been rung would know whether he got that phone call or not. Unfortunately, he is not able to be here with us today. Unfortunately, given the fact that he was planning to be here, we did not have the opportunity to have that kind of shared briefing that would have allowed me to answer some of his questions.

**Senator EDWARDS:** You would have a record of that. Would you mind providing it on notice for us, please.

---

**5. HANSARD, PG 12**

---

**Senator THISTLETHWAITE:** Mr Hansen, you said earlier in your evidence that your organisation had had regular contact with abattoirs in Indonesia and that you had informed them of the need for constant vigilance and the fact that animal welfare groups were keeping an eye on what was going on up there. Prior to the *Four Corners* episode going to air, did you inform any of those abattoirs that the Australian government might consider shutting the trade down if the standards did not improve?

**Ms Hansen:** I would have to take that on notice. I am not sure of the direct conversations or direct correspondence which took place.

---

**6. HANSARD, PG 13**

---

**Senator THISTLETHWAITE:** Can I ask you to take two questions on notice. Firstly, how was a representative of MLA informed, by a government representative, that the government was considering shutting the trade if standards did not improve, and when was that message conveyed to MLA? Secondly, did MLA inform any member producers of whether the government was considering shutting the trade because of standards, prior to the *Four Corners* episode?

**Mr Hansen:** Certainly.

---

**7. HANSARD, PG 13**

---

**Senator ADAMS:** Thanks, gentlemen. While we were up in Broome we were advised that a shipment of cattle had gone to Vietnam and another to the Philippines. So what involvement has MLA had with those two countries as far as doing any training? I have just read what you have in your notes, but would you be able to give me a quick brief on that?

**Mr Hansen:** Sure, and I might hand over to our live export manager.

**Mr Finucan:** I could probably get more detail taking it on notice, but we have run a stunning campaign in the Philippines over a number of years in the past, and just recently we co-funded, with the Northern Territory government, one of their officers to go up to Vietnam and pre-inspect the facilities in Vietnam to facilitate that shipment going. So we have run a number of programs in different countries at different times, and I can make a more detailed summary.



---

**1. HANSARD, PG 5**

---

**Senator SIEWERT:** I want to go back to the question that Senator Sterle asked about: talking to the abattoirs. You may need to take some of these questions on notice. I formed an understanding on this issue from the discussion we had here last week with the ABC. I understood the discussion was around a fairly recent conversation—and I did not take it that it was a visit; I took it that it was a conversation; it could have been a visit or a conversation, I do not know. So, in the recent past, there had been a conversation, not necessarily part of your ongoing program of discussion with abattoirs. So what I would like to know is: for that particular example, of that abattoir and other abattoirs, had MLA been in recent contact with them about any Animals Australia filming, any *Four Corners* filming or any other possibility of somebody filming? We now know that the local activists have also got similar film, taken subsequently, as I understand it.

**Mr Hansen:** I would have to take that on notice.

**MLA RESPONSE ON NOTICE**

MLA did not contact any abattoirs regarding filming by Animals Australia before they took video footage on 15 and 16 March 2011.

With regard to the ABC filming, MLA was first contacted by the ABC on 1 April 2011 seeking assistance. Prior to the ABC's arrival in Indonesia, MLA advised APFINDO (Indonesian Feedlot Association) of the proposed ABC filming and we are aware that APFINDO made contact with a number of abattoirs prior to the filming. The ABC directly approached abattoirs to request permission to film and in some circumstances this led to the abattoirs advising MLA of the requests. Also, MLA had been in contact with the ABC to offer assistance for the program, which led to contact being made with Indonesian operators.

There was a general understanding in the market that the ABC were seeking to film, and discussions with MLA staff and Indonesian operators therefore took place in relation to the filming.

The letter tabled by Senator Thistlethwaite was sent to 4 non APFINDO feedlots on or about 6 May 2011.

---

**2. HANSARD, PG 8**

---

**Dr Barnard:** We had a specific project on it over the last 18 months, increasing the amount of stunning in Indonesia. As I said, that involved a couple of steps. It involved getting the support of religious authorities. We got one of the religious authorities to make a video supporting the practice. It involved looking at regulations in Indonesia to import stunning equipment. There are two types of stunning equipment; one involves pneumatics, but the easier equipment to use—and the cheaper equipment—uses explosives. So there were issues that we had to look at in importing that equipment into Indonesia. That was the second significant step in the project.

A third significant step was to demonstrate the practice in a couple of abattoirs. Of course, there have always been some abattoirs in Indonesia that have stunned. The Elders plant is an example of that. But there was a significant number of secondary plants where we were specifically aiming to increase their adoption of stunning.

**Senator XENOPHON:** Perhaps on notice you could give an idea for the last 18 months of what the resources were that were allocated to that? Specific resources would be useful.

**Dr Barnard:** Sure.

### **MLA RESPONSE ON NOTICE**

A project to increase the number of facilities that use stunning in Indonesia was included in MLA's 2010/11 annual plan. In accord with the plan, an Indonesian company was contracted to implement the project with an objective to establish a system for importing stunning equipment and to introduce stunning at five abattoirs. The project included a training program for the operators of equipment to ensure successful uptake. The project required consultation with religious authorities, customs, police and abattoir operators. MLA Jakarta staff have been actively encouraging and working with the consultant and other sectors of industry to uptake stunning.

As result of the stunning project, after many months of consultation with various authorities, a formal process for importing power loads has now been established. Two importers are now approved to sell power loads and stunners to abattoirs.

An initial part of this project included seeking support from Halal religious authorities and the West Java MUI (religious authorities) participated in a DVD to promote their endorsement of stunning. As at 30 June 2011, approximately \$25,000 was spent directly on this project, plus costs associated with custom building a stunning box and conversion of a Mark I box (approximately \$13,500), plus considerable staff resources.

---

### **3. HANSARD, PG 9**

**Senator XENOPHON:** You may want to take this on notice: how do you react to the information you have about the transport and distribution of animals in Saudi Arabia and the preslaughtering restraint in that country—the slaughter processes in Saudi Arabia?

And my final issue—given time constraints—is how does MLA determine the acceptability of new markets or criteria for those new markets that you are looking at opening up in the context of animal welfare outcomes?

**Mr Hansen:** Taking it on notice specifically about Saudi Arabia, I must say that one of the challenges with a country like Saudi Arabia is the difficulty of access to all the



facilities that we would be looking to access. We can take that on notice and come back to you on that.

#### **MLA RESPONSE ON NOTICE**

Saudi Arabia is geographically large with a land area of 2,149,690 sq km (85% the size of WA) and a population of nearly 26 million people. There is strong demand for locally processed fresh meat across the country which necessitates an extensive transport and distribution system. Accordingly, transport vehicles are typically in reasonable condition to ensure the livestock's timely and safe delivery. Our exposure to slaughter houses in Saudi Arabia is limited due to the restrictive nature of the country.

The question regarding criteria for new markets was answered during the hearing (see transcript page 9).

The final decision to open a market is with the Australian Government after agreeing with the importing government on a range of aspects, such as the health protocols.

---

#### **4. HANSARD, PG 10-11**

---

**Senator EDWARDS:** Thank you, gentlemen. When did the minister know of the problems in Indonesia and address them with you folk at MLA?

**Mr Hansen:** We are certainly aware that the minister wrote to, I believe, the Australian Livestock Exporters Council, ALEC, and LiveCorp in January this year in relation to sheep in Kuwait and livestock export issues generally. We did not receive any correspondence on that matter, as you would expect us not to, given the fact that livestock export issues are primarily the domain of both the live exporters themselves, represented by their peak council and their service body, LiveCorp. So I am not aware of what time, post that, that any issues regarding Indonesia were raised with MLA. I would have to take that on notice.

**Senator EDWARDS:** Did the minister raise anything at all with MLA around the time of the ban?

**Mr Hansen:** Around the time of the ban, again, without those who were present in those discussions, I would have to take it on notice, Senator.

**Senator EDWARDS:** It is a fairly significant issue. You would know whether the federal minister for agriculture rang you about it, though.

**Mr Hansen:** And I am sure the person who would have been rung would know whether he got that phone call or not. Unfortunately, he is not able to be here with us today. Unfortunately, given the fact that he was planning to be here, we did not have the opportunity to have that kind of shared briefing that would have allowed me to answer some of his questions.

**Senator EDWARDS:** You would have a record of that. Would you mind providing it on notice for us, please.

## **MLA RESPONSE ON NOTICE**

MLA, LiveCorp and the Australian Government have worked closely together in relation to animal welfare improvements in Indonesia since 2005/06, following the commencement of the joint program. Most recently, by letter dated 21 January 2011, MLA outlined the conclusions of the independent study which had been conducted to provide advice on conditions for Australian cattle in Indonesia. The letter also attached an action plan outlining how the industry would be responding to each of the recommendations made in the study. The Minister acknowledged receipt of the information in a letter to MLA and LiveCorp dated 4 March 2011.

Following the 4 Corners program, the MLA Chairman met with the Minister on Thursday 2 June 2011. The MLA Chairman was advised of the ban by a member of the Minister's staff on the evening of 7 June 2011.

---

### **5. HANSARD, PG 12**

---

**Senator THISTLETHWAITE:** Mr Hansen, you said earlier in your evidence that your organisation had had regular contact with abattoirs in Indonesia and that you had informed them of the need for constant vigilance and the fact that animal welfare groups were keeping an eye on what was going on up there. Prior to the *Four Corners* episode going to air, did you inform any of those abattoirs that the Australian government might consider shutting the trade down if the standards did not improve?

**Mr Hansen:** I would have to take that on notice. I am not sure of the direct conversations or direct correspondence which took place.

## **MLA RESPONSE ON NOTICE**

The letter tabled (dated 6 May 2011) indicates that MLA had raised the possibility not on any specific advice of the Australian Government but, an option available to the Australian Government to shut the trade or put a ban on where cattle are able to be exported to (as had been the case in Egypt in 2006). MLA staff in Indonesia fielded enquiries from Indonesian commercial operators as to possible outcomes of the Animals Australia footage and reference was made during these conversations to the action that the Australian Government had taken in Egypt.

---

**6. HANSARD, PG 13**

---

**Senator THISTLETHWAITE:** Can I ask you to take two questions on notice. Firstly, how was a representative of MLA informed, by a government representative, that the government was considering shutting the trade if standards did not improve, and when was that message conveyed to MLA? Secondly, did MLA inform any member producers of whether the government was considering shutting the trade because of standards, prior to the *Four Corners* episode?

**Mr Hansen:** Certainly.

**MLA RESPONSE ON NOTICE**

The MLA representative who signed the letter which was tabled (dated 6 May 2011) was not informed by any Australian Government representative that the Australian Government was considering shutting the trade.

MLA had no knowledge that the Government was considering shutting the trade prior to the *Four Corners* episode.

---

**7. HANSARD, PG 13**

---

**Senator ADAMS:** Thanks, gentlemen. While we were up in Broome we were advised that a shipment of cattle had gone to Vietnam and another to the Philippines. So what involvement has MLA had with those two countries as far as doing any training? I have just read what you have in your notes, but would you be able to give me a quick brief on that?

**Mr Hansen:** Sure, and I might hand over to our live export manager.

**Mr Finucan:** I could probably get more detail taking it on notice, but we have run a stunning campaign in the Philippines over a number of years in the past, and just recently we co-funded, with the Northern Territory government, one of their officers to go up to Vietnam and pre-inspect the facilities in Vietnam to facilitate that shipment going. So we have run a number of programs in different countries at different times, and I can make a more detailed summary.

**MLA RESPONSE ON NOTICE**

Vietnam

MLA is co-funding NT Government technical staff in training to assist shipments of cattle to Vietnam. The first shipment of cattle for many years to Vietnam discharged on 13 September 2011. NT government staff provided training and assistance in the feedlot and abattoir lairage including customized SOP training materials based on MLA SOP training documents. As this market develops further, follow-up training visits by NT government staff will be co-funded by MLA.

### Philippines

In 2009 and 2010, MLA training support was provided to a new feedlotter, assisting with nutrition and management advice. MLA also conducted a stunning project (2007-09).

### Malaysia

Training support has been provided to a feedlot, assisting with nutrition and management advice, and in a workshop on cattle breeding under palm plantations.