



SUBMISSION TO SENATE RURAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT REFERENCES COMMITTEE

On 16 June 2011, the Senate moved that the following matters be referred to the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 25 August 2011:

1. Investigate and report into the role and effectiveness of Government, Meat and Livestock Australia, Livecorp and relevant industry bodies in improving animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets, including:

- a) The level, nature and effectiveness of expenditure and efforts to promote or improve animal welfare standards with respect to all Australian live export market countries;
 - i) expenditure and efforts on marketing and promoting live export to Australian producers;
 - ii) ongoing monitoring of the subscription to, and practise of, animal welfare standards in all live export market countries;
 - iii) actions to improve animal welfare outcomes in all other live export market countries and the evidence base for these actions.

b) The extent of knowledge of animal welfare practices in Australia's live export markets including:

- i) formal and informal monitoring and reporting structures;
- ii) formal and informal processes for reporting and addressing poor animal welfare practices.

2. Investigate and report on the domestic economic impact of the live export trade within Australia including:

- a) Impact on regional and remote employment especially in northern Australia;
- b) Impact and role of the industry on local livestock production and prices;
- c) Impact on the processing of live stock within Australia.

3. Other related matters.



1. The Livestock and Rural Transport Association of Western Australia (Inc) represents the majority of livestock transport companies in Western Australia. Western Australia is the largest exporter of live sheep and the second largest exporter of live cattle. Our member companies transport the majority of livestock destined for the live export market.

2. The Association has a track record of promoting best practice animal welfare and has worked with government and non-government bodies to bring about behavioural change to improve results. The Association took a lead role in providing feedback on the Land Transport Animal Welfare Standards to ensure that animal welfare was enhanced by placing accountability for welfare on those parts of the supply chain that actually control results.
3. This submission is made in the interests of our members and seeking to support their businesses. The submission also seeks to draw attention to the leadership role that Australia can play in encouraging a broad commitment to continuous improvement in animal welfare in destination countries such as Indonesia. Australia's adherence to sound animal welfare standards is high and we possess significant expertise both at a government and industry level that in the right circumstances could be made available to destination countries. Australia has a history of providing many different types of aid to Indonesia. We should use the relationship built through this process to work with the Government to improve animal welfare. Ironically Australia recently provided \$6.5 million over two years to tackle chronic food shortages in Indonesia.
4. Without doubt animal welfare in countries such as Indonesia will not be improved by Australia vacating the field and leaving the market open to other countries that have much lower animal welfare standards, if any at all. These countries are also unlikely to have the political influence that Australia has.
5. It is also important to recognise that Australian businesses associated with the live export industry are acutely aware of the scrutiny it receives. They are therefore very motivated to ensure a high degree of transparency in their actions to demonstrate compliance and commitment to animal welfare.
6. The ASEL cover the 6 major steps in the export chain, transport of course being one of them.
7. The LRTAWA considers that the ASEL are adequate insofar as they provide a sturdy framework for ensuring the welfare of livestock in the live export chain if they are applied consistently and with rigour. The implementation of the Standards can be variable where preparation prior to transport either from the paddock or saleyard is concerned. The Association has long contended that improved preparation with regard to curfews (time off feed and water) and selecting livestock that are fit to travel would improve the overall welfare of animals during transport and at the destination. These issues can be dealt with under the existing regulatory arrangements with improved education and oversight.
8. The Association has also consistently promoted change to the National Vendor Declaration Scheme (NVD) to ensure a greater emphasis on recording the time livestock last had access to feed and water; and fitness to load as part of the overall improvement in livestock preparation prior to transport. Whilst this information used to be provided on the NVD for sheep it has been removed and it is not included on the NVD for cattle. The inclusion of this information would introduce a greater level of discipline with regard to time off feed and

water as the NVD is a legally binding declaration. This issue was raised with Meat and Livestock Australia several years ago who did not support the change.

9. In conclusion the LRTAWA strongly supports the \$1billion live export trade from Australia. The trade employs approximately 13,000 people including those in our own industry and supports the economies of many rural areas.
10. The regulations that underpin live export are robust and ensure that animals that leave Australia have been subjected to a high level of care. Australia is in a strong position to influence the animal welfare standards in destination countries. If the Australian Government is genuinely concerned about animal welfare it needs to ensure the continued growth of the Australian live export industry.