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RIVEREN STATION

Website: www.terryunderwood.com
ABN 84 854 094 685

14th July 2011

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

Dear Sir,

In reference to clause 2a of your enquiry regarding the implications of the Live Export Trade on regional Australia and those who rely on this trade for our livelihood, I request your consideration of our story, the story of multigenerational pastoralists who deplore animal cruelty.

My family started investing in the Northern Territory in 1956 and we have deepened our investment and commitment ever since. With two properties in the Victoria River District and a third in the Douglas Daly region, we are responsible for 5 thousand square kilometres and 40,000 head of cattle. Having bred the preferred cattle for the boats over the decades, we are totally dependent on the Live Export Trade turning off 6,000 head annually to Indonesia.

I was the Northern Territory representative on Cattle Council of Australia from 1987 until 1990, when all eyes were on the opening up of our beef trade with Japan and Korea. My hard won battle was to raise the awareness of the potential of the Live Export Trade from Northern Australia to our near neighbours in South East Asia.

With Cattle Council support the Live Export Trade has made gigantic progress, as has the treatment of cattle in South East Asian abattoirs. While some back of beyond abattoirs which kill for local consumption, ie the wet markets, still have improvements to make, the abattoirs that kill for major city trade have adopted acceptable practices with the assistance of Australian equipment and expertise.

How the Australian government could shut down the trade which feeds people on our doorstep less fortunate than we Australians is beyond comprehension. How shutting down the trade in response to shocking ABC television 4 corners footage can improve animal cruelty in Indonesia is also beyond comprehension. The only way to influence Indonesians is to continue to support and work beside them, not to condemn and insult them.

The Minister's condemnation of Indonesian practices has resulted in seriously jeopardising our industry, one born from the courageous endeavours of our pioneers and overlanders.

John Underwood AM
Owner / Manager