



NORTHERN VETERINARY SERVICES

Tony Hayne BVSc

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My name is Tony Hayne and I am a Veterinarian dealing with the live export industry for the past 17 years. My family and I also operate a Stud and Commercial cattle operation of about 5,000 head in the Top End of the NT. Due to this involvement I feel qualified to make an informed submission to your review.

I will address the terms of reference, in order, to hopefully provide a clear and concise response.

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;

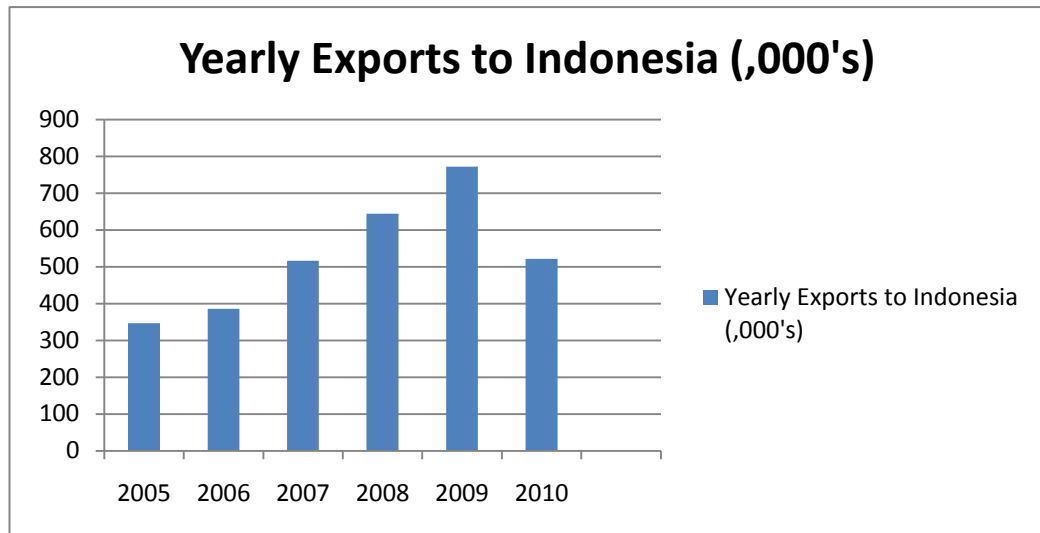
iii) actions to improve animal welfare outcomes in all other live export market countries and the evidence base for these actions.

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.

Never has any industry been so let down by its so called leadership than has ours. Cattlemen and women have invested a huge amount of money and trust into a lame duck- the MLA. My figures on the recent numbers exported to Indonesia reinforce my point.



In December 2009 an MLA office was opened in Indonesia

In 2010 a 350 weight limit was enforced and numbers were reduced 30% due to imposition of quotas

In 2011 the industry finds itself effectively shut down due to systemic failures at the slaughter point

We have gone from a relatively strong industry only 18 months ago, to an industry in absolute chaos. It was only in December 2009 that MLA started an office in Indonesia, at the request of industry participants that felt short-changed with their levy contributions. How much of a mistake that was is only now beginning to show. At the time we were growing at about 20% per year and exported 770,000 head that year. Within twelve months of their presence we were back to 520,000 for the year, a quota was imposed as well as a 350 kg weight limit being enforced. Massive disruptions to this industry. Now only 6 months further on we find ourselves in this disastrous situation. No matter what happens from here on in we have been irreparably damaged, through no fault of 99% of the levy payers of the industry.

Even on the footage shown on 4 Corners there was only one point of frustration in the entire industry. Animals that had been born and lived for 2 years on our stations, trucked to a wharf, loaded onto a ship, exported to Indonesia and fed in a feedlot were shown in an exemplary manner. 99.9% of their life we could be proud of. It was only the final few minutes of their life that let all of us down and cast an evil shadow upon all of us. This was not something that any of the people paying the levies expected or deserved. The vast majority of industry participants were innocent parties who had been massively let down by a minority further along the chain. A point continually reinforced by the media is that we have had a long history of participation in this trade; with continual statements about the improvements we are making – only to be shown MLA sanctioned and branded facilities that were totally inadequate and inhumane. The entire industry up to that point had been massively let down by a select few in whom we had invested trust and dollars.

I see this industry infested with people that are there for the free ride. When we find ourselves in the disastrous state that we are now in they really have nothing to lose other than a job – which they can easily replace tomorrow. Our industry has been over run by a “jobs for the boys” leadership. Cameron Hall, the “Leader” of Livecorp is a perfect example of this - \$350,000 per year, paid for by the cattle producers’ levies and now resigning to work for Landmark when the going gets tough. Unfortunately the levy payers don’t have that option – their lives are permanently linked to the industry that he and his colleagues have massively failed.

Many of the MLA contracts awarded are delivered to associates of MLA leadership, at the expense of many more qualified and suitable applicants. The engagement of Adam Hill to appoint welfare supervisors during this crisis is but a single example of this tradition.

Another case in point is the MLA sanctioned knocking boxes shown on the footage. I had to point out to people involved in their design and implementation the fact that Temple Grandin has a design with much greater welfare outcomes available. I see that they are now playing with this design, but surely people who were receiving the MLA funds should have investigated this prior to building and installing the boxes shown in the 4 Corners footage.

Moving forward I see the appointment of a focussed Live Export representative body as imperative. This would require removing all Live Export responsibilities from MLA, and those responsibilities being undertaken by this new group. The funding for this body would be by all Levies paid through Live Export transactions being redirected from MLA to the new body. Live Export simply cannot survive under the current representative arrangements due to a number of points including–

- The specific and sensitive requirements of the trade
- The conflict of interest between Australian meatworks and live export. This industry simply cannot survive while it comes under MLA which is disproportionately governed by Meatworks representatives, who have openly expressed their opposition to the trade.

Any new body would have to be representative of and accountable to the industry it represents – the levy payers. As I see it this body could replace the current MLA live export team, as well as Livecorp and ALEC. These bodies could have representation within and would be accountable to the body. This would make a much more focussed and less disjointed system than the one that currently operates.

By ensuring independent Veterinary representation on the board we could maintain a level of welfare focus to ensure that the industry never “drops the ball” on welfare issues again, in any of its markets.

This body could work alongside MLA on issues that jointly affected all Australian graziers, however could never be dictated to by it, as this would see the current system maintained, under a different guise.

A democratic method of deciding whether this was an appropriate way forward would be to have a vote of Live Export Levy payers on the matter. This would ensure that the stakeholders were receiving value for their money.

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.*

I will address this point from a NT Vets perspective.

If Australia were to step out of the Indonesian Live export trade our place will be taken by countries that do not have the checks and balances currently involved in Australia. These cattle will also be forced to undertake a much longer and more treacherous sea voyage under far less stringent welfare conditions than we impose on our much shorter voyage. This will surely lead to a lowering of welfare standards, and increased suffering for animals from those countries that take our place.

The countries that are preparing to take our place also have much lower animal health standards than we maintain, including the presence of “Foot and Mouth disease”. At the moment by exporting our animals to Indonesia we are effectively maintaining a “Foot and Mouth disease” buffer, for all of Australia. Were Indonesia to begin taking cattle from these countries and become infected with this massively devastating disease, it would only be a short matter of time before it made its way to our Northern shores. This would have catastrophic effects, on both a financial and animal welfare basis, to every farmer in Australia. Millions of animals would be destroyed and our economy would suffer a tremendous blow as well. We have all seen the footage from the UK’s FMD outbreaks of massive piles of dead animals being burnt and would never wish to see it on our shores.

Another direct result of the fallout from a live export ban is that there will be many vet practices, such as my own that will become unviable. This will lead to job losses as well as a lowering of access to Veterinary help for the graziers and animals throughout Northern Australia. There will also be less surveillance for exotic and endemic diseases by the Veterinary network throughout Australia. This is a recipe for disaster, to lower surveillance at the same time as we face a greatly heightened risk of exotic disease incursion.

I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and would welcome any feedback or further involvement that I may offer.

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