

SUBMISSION

I make this submission in support of the Australian live export industry for consideration in the 'Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets' Senate Inquiry being conducted by the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee.

I refer directly to the Terms of Reference that the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee will inquire and report on and my opinion in relation to each Term of Reference is as follows:-

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.

I believe the MLA & Livecorp have made great inroads into Animal Welfare in our live export markets. Whether it has been done efficiently as regards expenditure is a separate issue. The previous government recommended a senate inquiry into the MLA years ago, and this has been requested by industry repeatedly since the inception of the MLA. The structure is now under scrutiny, and it is my strong belief that an overhaul is long overdue.

This body has probably performed better with regard to Animal Welfare than in a lot of other areas, however the irony of the MLA is that it is the beef industry's marketing specialist, but it is very ineffective at getting positive messages across. The standards are there, the technology is available (ie NLIS tracking) but not necessarily being implemented.

MLA is too bureaucratic, with people making decisions and getting paid regardless of outcomes. Lacking in commercial focus, and with inadequate performance drivers, our industry would be better served by marketing expertise available to and utilized by private enterprise.

One of our major failures is communicating the good things done for animal welfare.

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.

Our knowledge of circumstances in importing countries is second hand from what is available in media, which contains the prejudice of the journalist's opinion and is usually self serving sensationalism.

NLIS tracking should be fully utilised to control animal destiny and to reveal actuals, which would not allow naughty mischief makers to distort or misrepresent the truth solid and genuinely good business management systems.

Australia needs to be allowed to lead by example, and to walk away from countries where problems are known to exist would be irresponsible at the least, if not criminal and inhumane.

Australia's \$500,000,000 in foreign aid to Indonesia should come "with strings attached" that can directly benefit our country and economy. Some financial support should be for infrastructure to bring more facilities up to standard, as this would be a win win for all parties. If you feed a man he eats for a day, teach him to fish and he will eat for life.

Money could also be directed towards further education. Over twenty years ago, in the development stages of live export, we hosted 4 young Indonesian s for a week on our cattle station. This was to provide them with experience of cattle handling and an insight into bovine existence in Australia. These men worked for the Dept of Ag or equivalent.

I believe it would be worthwhile to incorporate formal training in Low Stress Stock Handling across Australia & overseas. This might include host trainees as above, for Indonesians working in the livestock industry.

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.

Through our levy, it has cost Australia millions to develop the live export market, which was done because we need this outlet.

The beef industry, and particularly northern beef producers have been stronger for it, with an improvement in their bottom line that also improves the operational level, creating employment and circulating cash through the local & national economies.

If all the northern stock had to be transported south for finishing and processing, their value would be hugely diminished because of transport costs and oversupply, as in the past.

The impact on already inadequate transport infrastructure would be a big imposition on government to provide expensive upgrades.

The above would create a bigger carbon footprint than grass fed store cattle exported live.

3. Other related matters.

It is smart to allow Indonesia to import Australian cattle for a number of reasons. We do not want all our eggs in one basket – live export adds a valuable dimension to the beef industry.

- Australia does not have the capacity to produce and process all of Indonesian's beef requirements especially during times of drought.
- The land these store cattle are raised on is not suitable for other sorts of food production, or for finishing these cattle to slaughter specifications.
- We do not have enough labour currently, let alone any surplus, to meet an increase in supplying beef as opposed to live cattle.
- With the increasing demand for food, our ability to supply the world is going to be over extended– especially with coal & coal seam gas intruding on our prime agricultural land, and poaching all our workers. It makes sense to have a partnership with a country that can assist, our need elevated in the future as the world population increases.
- It makes Indonesia more self sufficient and utilizes their by products as feed, (does a better job for the planet, utilizing what otherwise would be waste...)
- Providing cattle off grass into this market minimizes our carbon imprint.

Signed:	(Kelva) Dyan Hughes
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