

14<sup>th</sup> July 2011

To whom it may concern,

Please accept my submission regarding the Review of Australia's Livestock Export Trade.

It is often stated that, 'past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour'. The validity and reliability of this statement is manifest when applied to countries that have repeatedly failed in their 'duty of care' to animals transported by Australia under the Live Export Trade. To illustrate this point, this submission provides a brief synopsis of the ongoing inhumane treatment of Australian animals in Egypt and more recently in Indonesia. Furthermore, the failure of successive governments to act in a substantive way to prevent further suffering is highlighted.

On Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2006, the 60 Minutes programme showed Australian cattle that had been exported to Egypt, under the livestock export trade, being treated in the most barbaric and inhumane way at Cairo's major abattoir, Bassateena. Consequently, I and many other people felt compelled to write to members of Parliament regarding the export of live animals to Egypt because of the horrific treatment the animals endured en-route and upon arrival at their destinations.

As a result of the public outcry, then Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, suspended the live trade in animals to Egypt. However, the trade was quickly reinstated on 3rd October 2006, on the basis of the Memoranda of Understanding (*MOU on Handling and Slaughter of Australian Live Animals*) that had been signed by the two governments. The MOU stipulated that international animal welfare guidelines (not standards) established by the World Animal Health Organisation (known as IOE<sup>1</sup>) applied to the handling of Australian livestock. (It should be noted that the OIE guidelines are lower than the Australian standards, as for example, stunning is not required before killing, which according to Halal, involves slitting the animal's throat and bleeding an animal to death<sup>2</sup>).

Agriculture Minister, Peter McGauran, who signed the MOU, said, "Egypt has provided assurances that the health and welfare of Australian livestock exported to Egypt will be protected in line with agreed international standards". However, unfortunately for the animals, Egypt was unable to fulfil its obligations under the MOU and on 13th February 2007, the Minister, Peter McGauran, acknowledged there had been "...some appalling cases of animal cruelty detailed in a report released late last year by animal welfare group, Animals Australia". The report documented eye witness breaches by the hundred, (not isolated cases) of the provisions of the Australia/Egypt MOU. Therefore, in view of the acknowledged breaches of the MOU, it became clear that despite the efforts of the Australian government, the well-being and safety of Australia's animals could not be guaranteed once they had left our shores.

Fast forward to 2011, and today we are faced with a very similar scenario to that of 2006; however, this time around Indonesia is the country of focus that is failing to provide humane treatment for Australian animals. Now, as before, there was a public outcry, the pros and cons of the trade were bandied around, a short ban was instituted by the current

Minister, Joe Ludwig, hurried negotiations followed, then it was full steam ahead with the trade after some minor modifications. The government knows that eventually the publicity will die down and the horror of the trade will fade from the public's attention – but all the while the animals' suffering continues...

Surely by now it is clear that none of the previously tried 'solutions' have worked. There has to be a better way! What is preventing Australia from following New Zealand's admirable example and eliminating the live export industry? Australia could reopen the abattoirs that were closed, resulting in the loss of 40,000 jobs, and our meat export trade could be expanded, which would provide more work for Australians and protect livestock producers from being financially disadvantaged by cessation of the trade. In fact, the Bill introduced by Senator Nick Xenophon and MP Andrew Wilkie provides for a perfectly reasonable transition period of three years before a permanent ban on live exporting begins, which would enable farmers and other interested parties to adjust to the new market conditions. During that time, Australia could divert the money spent on running the abattoirs in Indonesia to providing refrigeration facilities for chilled meat. The fact that some remote areas of Indonesia or Egypt do not have refrigeration facilities is not Australia's responsibility nor is it grounds for the Australian government to jettison humane standards of animal treatment. Moreover, Australia should not be lowering its standards to meet the demands of other nations by regressing to practices that belong to antiquity; rather Australia should be raising the standard of both animal and human rights. I believe that, 'where there is a political will, there is always a political way' and Australia could regain its moral compass by standing up for what is ethical and humane as, 'evil prospers when good people do nothing' – and there is no doubt that this trade in misery is inherently evil.

In conclusion, in defence of the animals, I respectfully ask the question: Are we as a people blind and deaf to the abject suffering of sentient beings, as was René Descartes (1596-1650) when he argued that animals do not experience pain and suffering as the justification for his dissection of living animals. It is now over 200 years since Descartes' ideas were discredited during the *Enlightenment*, which according to Kant, was, "Mankind's final coming of age, the emancipation of the human consciousness from an immature state of ignorance and error". Today, we no longer live in an immature state of ignorance as we are aware that animals are sentient beings, but we continue to live in error and are without excuse when we use *Trade* and *Profit* as justification for sanctioning the untold suffering of millions of defenceless animals.

Sincerely,

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## References

<sup>1</sup> The OIE is based in Paris and represents 167 member countries, including Egypt (see [www.oit.int](http://www.oit.int)). In 2006 the OIE adopted 4 animal welfare Guidelines under its Terrestrial Animal Health Code. The relevant sections of this code relate to 'international animal welfare standards' and include *guidelines* on the transport of animals by land and sea, and on the slaughter of animals.

<sup>2</sup>Halal slaughter requires that the animal:

be faced to Mecca;

be dedicated verbally to the prophet prior to cutting its throat;

not be killed in the presence of others;

not be bound before slaughter;

be killed with one swift cut to the throat, causing as little pain as possible; and

be treated kindly.

In Australia, Halal slaughter also requires the animals be stunned (rendered unconscious) prior to slaughter.

In contrast, in larger Middle East abattoirs where approximately 2,000 to 3,000 sheep would be slaughtered each night, it is common practice to drag a sheep by its hind leg (away from a watching herd), turn the sheep upside down over a drain (often where other sheep lie whose throats have just been cut and are still writhing), cut the throat of the sheep (frequently taking three separate motions to sever the windpipe and major blood vessels), then leave the conscious sheep to "bleed out". This falls greatly short of Halal requirements.