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I ask that you please accept my submission to the ***Senate inquiry into Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets***. I have lodged a submission to the Independent Livestock Export Review, but was not aware that two separate inquiries were being undertaken. I trust that you will forgive this oversight on my part but also acknowledge that this requirement was not widely and clearly communicated.

Together with my husband and family (2 adult children and partners), we are live export producers based south of Darwin in the Northern Territory. We have been involved in this industry for approximately 20 years. This is an industry that we have proudly worked in, and within which we have raised our family with a vision of a stable and rewarding future. We were aghast and disgusted by the Government's handling of the live export issue and resulting ban, which has been described as *woeful* and *appalling*. Personally, I wholeheartedly agree: there is simply no excuse for closing down a billion dollar industry overnight in response to pressure from animal liberation campaigners. There was no consultation with the industry this decision has crippled and for this reason alone, the criticism of the Government, and Minister for Agriculture in particular is warranted. It was a complete over-reaction, unnecessary and unjustified. A suspension of those abattoirs that participated in that cruelty was justified: however there are a number of accredited abattoirs already online to take Australian live exports; that meet Australian welfare standards. It was a case of *throwing the baby out with the bath water*.

The motives of the parliamentary members who have put forward the Bills to prohibit the live export trade are questionable at best. I cannot fathom how they can stand before Australia and make these claims with any authority or credence; but foolishly choose to take the word of well meaning, but disillusioned individuals who also have no real knowledge of what goes on in this trade, or even more treacherously, have an alternative agenda.

The Gillard Government, led by an incompetent Minister for Agriculture, and *guided* by a *misguided* Green parliamentarian, was used in an orchestrated campaign; and one for which live export plays a part, and is now paying the price. There is a distinct difference between animal welfare and animal liberation and the real motives behind this campaign need to be identified. If Australia continues to support poor policy or policy "on-the-run" and encases it in legislation, Australians will ultimately be restricted in pet ownership, horse racing, rodeos and camp drafts, fishing, and food production from animal products of any kind. These are things that the Australia rural lifestyle and tourism has been built upon, a fabric of Australian society. Similarly, I do not make judgements on those who chose not to eat meat; and I expect that the same courtesy is afforded to the millions of people who do. There is a now clear divide between the city and the bush and it is the government's responsibility to re-unite Australia: children need to be educated about where their food comes from; adults need to learn tolerance and acceptance of diversity of opinion and lifestyles.

I would like to say at the outset that we do not support animal cruelty, and were as were appalled by the images portrayed in the recent 4 Corners footage as anyone. This cruelty cannot be ignored, nor condoned. Having said this, however, this does not mean the live export trade is "fundamentally broken, systemically

cruel and not in Australia's economic interest" as has been claimed by those caught up in the emotion of the images shown and most importantly, who have no independent or first-hand knowledge of the trade. Nor does it condemn those hard working Australians involved in the production and the vast supply chain that supports this important industry across Northern Australia.

Questions have been raised within Australia and Indonesia as to the legitimacy of that horrifying footage and the motives behind those involved in releasing it, or should I say, withholding it - until they were ensured maximum collateral damage with its release. Where animal welfare is paramount, there was nothing ethical about holding onto that footage for such a long period of time. Cruelty should not be condoned under any circumstances, yet by their own admission, Animals Australia chose to withhold the footage because they themselves did not have the confidence in the Government to act appropriately. The justification of this decision is something that will sit on their conscience, but also on the Government's to ponder. It is disappointing now however, that to set itself apart from that decision, these Independent members have now chosen to denounce the entire industry.

The role the RSPCA has played in this issue raises serious questions about the purpose of that organisation. Claiming to be an animal welfare organisation, they have aligned themselves with Animals Australia and clearly have animal liberation outcomes as their motive. I for one am ashamed that the RSPCA has maligned animal welfare by this association and strongly recommend that the RSPCA's aims be reviewed before any further Government funding is forthcoming. A single organisation cannot be judge and jury: it cannot be the welfare agent and the regulator: their involvement in the live export debate is proof of this.

I am at a loss as to how these Independent members of Parliament, who reside (and have always resided) in the southern states, can take the enormous liberties they have in putting forward the *Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011* and the *Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011* without consultation with the industry and the communities that this legislation will impact upon. It is the height of arrogance and hypocrisy.

The live cattle export industry is the largest contributor to the Northern Territory's agriculture, comprising 47.9% of the total production value estimated at \$251.1M. The flow-on effects from the industry in transport and retail trade are major contributors to regional economies in the Territory. Australia's livestock industry is a net provider of increased animal welfare outcomes onshore and off-shore but we can play no part in improving animal welfare in Indonesia or elsewhere if we simply walk away.

Indonesia is Australia's largest export market for live cattle, taking more than 520,000 cattle in 2011, 60% of all cattle exports. For many northern cattle producers the trade to Indonesia is the only viable option for their cattle. The *Bos indicus* (Brahman) cattle are not suited to processing in Australia due to their light weight and condition, and even when grown out and fattened, this type of animal is not preferred by our domestic and major export markets for chilled and frozen beef. The naive suggestions of exporting boxed beef to the Indonesian markets as the sole alternative to a live export industry clearly shows a lack of understanding on this issue. Whilst there is a place for box beef, it is one, not a total solution. It is unrealistic and unnecessary to dissolve a trade which contributes so heavily to the Australian economy and which can contribute positively to animal welfare outcomes on and off shore.

Northern Australia is well suited to producing lean 'store' cattle, but fattening cattle in the north is difficult at the best of times. Indonesia is one of the most cost efficient producers of animal feed in the world, there is a natural synergy that needs to be further strengthened through co-operation to achieve mutual benefit. There are limited opportunities for other industries in vast areas of Northern Australia. Serious environmental, economic and social impacts would occur without profitable beef cattle production. Much of northern Australia's rangelands can be described as marginal country, harsh in the dry and inhospitable in the wet. Many of these properties will become unviable and will have no alternative but to walk away. This will have flow on effects for natural biodiversity outcomes through land and environmental degradation from weeds and ferals, uncontrolled fires, and erosion. This is a no-win situation for everyone.

Senator Wilkie has demonstrated his poor recollection of events to which he has been party to at Duntroon , and yet he claims to have such a clear view for a solution to the live export trade: one which he knows nothing about. He admitted his involvement in "bastardisation" in the Army, and his current proposal is nothing more than an attempt to bastardise the live export industry. Senator Wilkie said (quote) "*Indonesians (will not) go hungry because on average they consume just two kilograms of red meat each a year. In other words, even the complete removal of Australian beef would make virtually no difference whatsoever*". This is contradicted by Senator Chris Back who recently said "*the Indonesians required 300 tonnes of beef a day, or about 800 cattle from Australia, to fill the market demand*". I thank Senator Back for providing valuable insight and informed knowledge to this debate.

Beef consumption in Indonesia has been increasing rapidly in recent years and, until the live export ban, Australia was supplying approximately 25-30pc of this demand via the export of more than 500,000 head annually. The majority of beef consumed in Indonesia is sourced from their dwindling herd of local cattle. The supply of live animals is also important for religious and cultural reasons. The purchase and ritual slaughter of live animals at the end of Ramadan is a fundamental pillar of the Qaran and the Middle Eastern culture. Although Indonesia forecast they would like to be self sufficient in animal production by 2014, the reality is that as the population's protein intake continues to increase, they are unlikely to be able to meet that demand and will rely on markets, such as Australia, to supplement cattle supply. Indonesia's food security is, or should be, fundamental to us all, and has been abruptly compromised because of the knee-jerk reaction by the Minister for Agriculture in order to appease the opponents of the live export industry and now by these Bills before the Parliament. These Bill's will be noted in Australian history, but for all the wrong reasons. For the sake of Australia's future, I sincerely hope this inquiry and the Parliament finds against them.

Australia has much at stake in this debate: currently, Australia and Indonesia enjoy freedom from the devastating exotic diseases, foot and mouth disease (FMD) and continued freedom from this disease is vital to the welfare of all livestock, including cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, camels, buffalo and deer. Indonesia acts as a vital buffer zone between Australia and other South-east Asian countries where FMD is endemic. If Australia does not supply Indonesia with live cattle, the Indonesian demand for beef will be met by countries where FMD is prevalent such as India or South American and South-east Asian countries. In the event of an outbreak of FMD, Indonesia and Australia would witness animal welfare issues of unimaginable proportions, resulting in the slaughter and disposal of millions of animals. The feral pig, goat and buffalo population would act as a reservoir for the disease and it would be impossible to eradicate. The suffering and economic damage would be inestimable. Australia takes this issue very seriously and, in recent years, has spent more than \$22m to help ensure Indonesia's freedom from FMD. The risk of exotic disease to Australia is very much diminished if Indonesia sources live cattle from a proven FMD free country such as Australia. For this reason alone it is imperative that we maintain the trade. We cannot play a role in animal welfare outcomes if we simply walk away.

The live export trade needs to urgently be resumed with certainty as to its future. Animal welfare issues can, and are being continually improved, and whilst it may take some time to ultimately influence cultural changes in Indonesia, live export producers are committed to ensuring facilities that receive our cattle are meeting international standards. These outcomes will be seen widely across Indonesia, not only within Australian cattle herds. If animal welfare is genuinely the reason for this debate, can we ignore the plight of animals because they are not Australian produce?

Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011 and the Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011 demonstrate the agenda and bias of the Australian live animal export industry by the members proposing them. Senator Wilkie described the MLA and the industry it represents as an *irresponsible, incompetent, dishonest and uncaring bunch of cowboys*. I would suggest that he has no authority to speak on behalf of our industry and these claims do not represent the breadth of opinion Australia wide. There is nothing sensible or politically realistic in the proposal to prohibit live exports. If motives are genuinely about animal welfare, these Independents should their discard political self-interest.

Australia invests heavily in animal welfare, onshore and offshore. Livestock producers invest in the welfare of their produce from birth to the point of sale to ensure that these animals receive the best of care. They are

weaned correctly, receive dietary supplementation where required, and vaccinations against a host of fatal diseases. Animal health products valued at \$15 million and lick blocks worth \$20 million are purchased annually for use on properties across northern Australia supplying the live export market. These improvements were largely unaffordable prior to the live export trade. If live exports cease, graziers will again be unable to afford such things as Botulism vaccinations and lick blocks; things that have become main-stream since the inception of live export. Large numbers of cattle across northern Australia will die horrible deaths as a consequence of the closure of the live export trade.

At the point of export, livestock are subjected to rigorous health and welfare checks by an Australian Veterinarian who performs a "fit and healthy to travel" inspection of every animal. These inspections are strictly monitored and audited by AQIS who re-examine and assess the documentation to ensure that high levels of integrity are maintained. This provides an additional layer of security to ensure that animal welfare standards are maintained. Any animals found not meeting these standards are removed and isolated. At the point of loading onto the ships, Australia again has some of the highest standards in the world determining the conditions for the animals, with strict and regulated stocking densities, feed and water requirements, and rigorous maritime inspections that must be maintained. The ships are equipped with vet kits on the ships that the Australian stockmen use to treat minor ailments in consultation with Vets. Today the live export industry benefits from the high quality of export vessels available and purpose built to address animal welfare standards. This has resulted in a less than 1% mortality rate on cattle in transit and contributes to the welfare, weight gains and well being of stock.

The Australian Live Export industry is one of the most regulated cattle supply chains in the world with every aspect of this chain focussing on ensuring the best welfare outcomes for the cattle involved. If Australia does not resume its live export trade, Indonesia will source cattle from further afield and these cattle will 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. If this really is about animal welfare, and no other hidden agendas, can Australia turn its back on our neighbour and on those animals that will suffer due to some short-sighted decisions? Australia is a net provider of increased animal welfare outcomes to the live export cattle trade but we can play no part in improving animal welfare in Indonesia if we simply walk away.

The facilities, treatment, handling and slaughter of livestock in Indonesia clearly vary. We have learnt so much about these facilities in recent months. There are a number of facilities that meet, or could readily meet, OIE standards. Those which don't need continued development, training and support in terms of welfare and handling issues to ensure they do, and will, meet those standards in the future. Australian producers contribute significant amounts of money towards the education, training and development in Indonesia. It is important to remember that this is a third world country, with very different cultural standards and practices to Australia. These standards may not have been met as quickly as we would have liked, but that does not mean that Australia should walk away from this important trade, in horror and disgust as has been suggested. Although clearly difficult, the emotion needs to be removed from the analysis of this debate. The enormous investments we have made to date and will build upon, will only continue to improve animal welfare and health standards across the board.

There is no logic or sound reason to suggest that Australia should cease the live export trade because of the poor animal welfare standards witnessed in Indonesia. Importantly, it should be recognised that behaviour was the exception, not the norm. Australia is one, if not the only country, that currently invests in animal welfare offshore. If Australia abandons the live export markets in Indonesia, or elsewhere, the investments and improvements we have made to date will cease, or at the very least, regress. Cultural practices which do not comply with OIE standards will be reintroduced and continue unabated. Indonesia will source a supply of cattle from other markets and these cattle will continue to be exposed to the same level of cruelty that sent Australians into this current frenzy. This will expose Australia to even greater risks through the introduction of foot and mouth disease if it were to reach Indonesia's shores.

Contrary to recent options portrayed, Australian live export producers do not torture their livestock, nor do they condone inhumane practice beyond the point of sale. I am not familiar with any other instance where livestock producers are required to be accountable for the welfare of their produce beyond the point of sale. Our continued investment in the trade is the only guarantee Australia has in addressing these practices and ensuring OIE or higher animal welfare standards are achieved in the future. The Australian Live Export industry is one of the most regulated cattle supply chains in the world with every aspect of this focusing on ensuring the best welfare outcomes for the cattle involved. If the live export trade with Indonesia ceases, Indonesia will source cattle from further afield and these cattle will be forced to undertake a much longer and more treacherous sea voyages 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 adoption of NLIS tags on all export cattle can provide a means to trace animals throughout the system. At the present time, livestock producers employ this method of traceability for cattle, with minor exceptions including cattle sold to live export from the property of origin. This system currently equates to considerable costs and resources for producers and they should not be further penalised through the introduction of additional tagging or tracing systems.

Personally, I am disappointed with the MLA in particular and feel they have been extremely remiss in their representation and delivery of outcomes for the live export industry. I accept fault on my part in that I contribute to the MLA through cattle levies imposed, yet have never taken an active and in-depth interest or involvement in what those outcomes were, are or should be. I have taken it on face value that an organisation like MLA would meet its charter; and I accept now that this may not be the case. I personally believe MLA has failed the Australian producers for whom they claim to represent. There have been much innuendo and suggestion about the ethics and performance of MLA representatives in Indonesia and it would appear that at the very least this current dilemma suggests they should also be subject of an independent review and evaluation. If they cannot deliver on the role they have been tasked to do, this organisation needs to be disbanded and replaced with a body accountable not only to the Australian live export producers that they source their funding from, but every Australian who has been impacted by the recent suspension of live export trade to Indonesia.

Australia, through the MLA or other representative, should have suitably qualified representatives in the abattoirs to supervise the slaughter of cattle until such time as we are confident that these higher standards are common place, accepted and not likely to regress. If cultural practices do not permit animals to be shot at the point of slaughter, stunning would be the most suitable option. Mark I slaughter boxes as shown in the recent television footage should not be permitted, however a suitable designed box should be mandatory: Australian Brahman cattle are much larger than the Indonesian cattle and although by their nature a quiet animal, because of their size and *fight or flight nature*, need to be handled in a controlled environment. A properly designed slaughter box would enable an animal's head to be secured, for it to be stunned, rotated onto its side unconscious, facing in the right direction, before its throat is cut. There is no reason to allow an animal to be shackled and dragged by its legs and thrash about on a concrete surface. RSPCA Australia do not dispute the finding that the installation of restraint boxes when accompanied by training is likely to offer benefits over tradition handling practice.

The current situation has demonstrated how vulnerable live export producers are in the market place. The option of providing chilled boxed beef to Indonesia is, and could continue to be a viable market alternative, however a limited one. These limitations include Indonesian cultural preferences, as well as freight and processing capacity. Northern Australia has limited market options in regards to processing beef:

- Brahman beef is not a preferred product in southern markets which prefer softer European breeds (not suitable for production in the tropics)
- Availability and access to slaughter houses/abattoirs
- Freight costs
- Seasonal impacts (wet season)

There is a well documented history of abattoirs operating across the Top End in particular. Whilst these operated effectively at their peak in the 1980's they have essential all closed due to a range of factors including:

- Consistent supply of stock for processing
- Staff (high wage costs, transient population for seasonal work, experienced staff)
- Wet season closures
- Government red tape (accreditation, inspections and Inspectors)
- Profitability

Similar profiles can be evidenced across other facilities interstate which are staffed heavily by overseas meat workers. The ownership monopoly of the abattoir industry in Australia contributes to the few opportunities available to develop new markets, even where abattoir and slaughtering facilities are available. There is much intimation of an abattoir opening in the Top End in the not too distant future. Whilst this is a welcome development, the facilities as I understand it, will be tailored to take that company's surplus and out of specification cattle. A viable long-term solution stills needs to be identified to take surplus stock, out of specification (heavy cattle, bulls, buffalo, cull cows etc) to provide industry with alternative and certainty.

The recent ban of live exports has had a severe effect on our livelihood and future, and on many others who work in the industry, both directly and indirectly. The closure of the industry would have wide reaching detrimental outcomes. There is still much uncertainty as to whether the trade will actually recover. In rural and remote areas, live export provides one of the few opportunities for Indigenous Australians in particular to find suitable long term employment. My family has been directly involved in a number of Indigenous pastoral enterprises and the closure of this industry will have a profound effect on the future for these people. There are limited opportunities for gainful employment in the bush in normal circumstances, and particularly for people who have low standards of education, qualifications and/or work experience. As live export producers, or to be able to work within this industry, provides Indigenous Australians with the opportunity to connect their heritage and culture to long term employment, training and educational opportunities. They will be severely disadvantaged as there are little alternative opportunities for them.

I really do not believe the people who propose the prohibition on this trade really understand life in northern Australia. We work hard, long hours in high temperatures and high humidity. My husband travels 450km one way to go to work – his work takes him away from his family for a week – or weeks – at a time. Our children have grown up without him being around every day for the last 12 years. These are the sacrifices we have made as a family because we believed that hard work and perseverance will provide us with a secure and worthwhile future in the long term. The *Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011* and the *Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011* now risk all this and proposes to take away our future. For those approaching retirement age, there will be few opportunities for alternative employment, particularly for graziers in the Top End when there is no market for the livestock they produce. Will we be forced to abandon everything we have saved and worked hard for because there is now no future for us here?

Regional areas have been hit hard by the ban and many regional and rural towns will suffer badly. Katherine in the NT is one regional town which is reeling by the effects of this ban. Businesses will close, job opportunities will be lost, property values will decline, and mortgage defaults will increase – as will the instances of depression or worse.

Parliamentarians have the future of rural Australians in their hands. I implore them to take their responsibilities very seriously. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. I hope this information and my producer's perspective assists you in your inquiry.

Jenny Deveraux