

Submission on Live Export

Live export is crucial to the economic activity in a huge proportion of the Australian continent. The fact that this area is under populated compared to Eastern and Southern Australia, lacks members in the Houses of Parliament (compared to the grotesque over-representation of areas like Tasmania), and is happily ignored despite its huge contribution to our international trade, is of great concern.

The recent attacks on live export and the campaign against it by animal welfare groups are based on some misunderstandings about the trade. Live export issues involving sheep and the Middle East are constantly conflated with the cattle trade to Indonesia. It is essential the inquiry clearly distinguish the disengenous, deceptive provision of statistics relating to live export to the Middle East instead of the Indonesian trade.

Transport of cattle from Darwin to Indonesia by boat is easily more humane than transporting similar time periods via road within Australia. There is much less danger of accidents on the boats than on the road. Animal welfare groups have not been able to specifically disparage this aspect of the trade because frankly they cannot. Our cattle take just three days to arrive in Indonesia ports from Darwin – how can this be inhumane? They gain weight on the trip – surely evidence they are well cared for and contented.

Indonesian slaughter practices must be improved. We can only improve them by working with Indonesia to gradually change the culture and behavior. Should Australia cease live export, not only will it unleash an animal welfare nightmare in northern Australia, destroying the natural environment due to unmanaged stock, with the rangelands overrun with wild feral animals which then die horrific 'natural' deaths, but the economy of northern Australia will be devastated.

Also the opportunity to change practice in Indonesia to assist all cattle will be lost. It is essential the inquiry looks beyond the petty parochialism of those who would turn our backs on our neighbours. For city or small-farm dwelling Australians to lecture Indonesians about how they should receive their meat is divisive and racist. The torrent of racism and xenophobia displayed towards Indonesians by many of the outraged activists is shocking and a disgrace. It gives a lie to Australia's claim to be 'tolerant' and 'diverse'.

Animal welfare activists who live in southern Australia and have never had any interaction with our industry have been fed propaganda from Animals Australia, the RSPCA and Four Corners. Serious questions not only need to be asked about slaughter practices and animal welfare in abattoirs in Indonesia. They also need to be asked of these animal welfare groups.

What role did they have in inciting the terrible treatment of the cattle concerned? What steps to Four Corners take to scrutinize the actions of the Animals Australia activists? Or is the program simply a mouthpiece for this group.

Is there "Activist Capture" of the ABC, rather than the "Industry Capture" some of its premier presenters claim. How much scrutiny do activists suffer when they attempt to use the ABC to promote their own ideas? These are questions the inquiry should ask. Or is our taxpayers money at work destroying our economy and industry?

Our livelihoods – and the well-being of our cattle – depend on it!