

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee
Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

As one who is involved in cattle production though not in the live export industry, I wish to appeal most earnestly for a full Senate, first-hand investigation into the many and varied issues pertaining to the industry and the serious impacts of the export ban.

Since the furore over this issue arose following a single, arguably biased television documentary, I have sought to inform myself of the real facts of the matter and have been appalled by the apparent ignorance of the real situation expressed by so many who consider themselves qualified to pass judgment. I wish to state that I find a serious lack of balance in the arguments of those who campaign for a ban.

Four Corners presenter, Sarah Ferguson more recently called for a resumption of the trade to those abattoirs that measure up to Australian standards, obviously recognising that the program did not present a fair appraisal of the situation.

Tragically, in the knee-jerk reaction by the government, there was no recognition of the likely unprecedented animal welfare problems which would ensue, nor the disastrous humanitarian crisis as not only producers, but thousands of others associated with the industry (including indigenous workers) lose their livelihoods and their dignity. There was no recognition of the fact that farmers had already been without income for a prolonged period of time due to extreme weather conditions and were already struggling financially, now just on the verge of a long-awaited breakthrough. No realisation of the resulting environmental degradation of pastures due to overgrazing by cattle that would otherwise have been shipped away. No recognition of farmers' years of industry in perfecting methods of production suited to the live export industry - only to have it instantaneously swept from under their feet - nor of the fact that a thriving industry had been built around live export, perfectly suited to the vast areas of the north that might otherwise remain unutilised.

Farmers, who had been relying on the well-paid MLA to oversee and protect their industry, have been most unfairly penalised as a result of the apparent negligence of this body. Nor should they have to *suffer the consequences* of such abysmal failure on the part of the government and the MLA.

The government owes it to producers to satisfactorily *fix* the problem, not ban the export. This can only be achieved by imminent resumption of the trade to those

abattoirs that are of international standard, with accurate tracking devices to ensure that no Australian animal is inadvertently sent to an inferior slaughterhouse. (Why have cattle producers been compelled to participate in the NLIS, which is declared to track our cattle from paddock to plate?) There are other slaughterhouses, we are informed, that could quickly be improved to a satisfactory standard, so these should be urgently upgraded, stun guns supplied where necessary, training for meat workers initiated as a matter of urgency. Problems are not remedied by walking away from them, and those who are genuinely concerned about animal welfare should express an equal concern for the cattle from other countries, which will otherwise continue to suffer the same fate.

Cattle producers were as outraged as others over the Four Corners disclosures, which were abhorrent in the extreme, and such cruelty should not be allowed to continue. But it is the cruelty that must be banned not the export.

Yours sincerely

Elizbeth Flower