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**Inquiry: Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets**

In the wake of the Australian Government suspending Australia's live export market to Indonesia after the televised report of cruelty to animals in the slaughtering process, it is time for a complete audit of the industry in its entirety.

This latest fiasco is not an isolated incident; for years there has been media attention regarding the welfare of the animals we send from our shores to overseas countries. These incidents have been associated to other overseas abattoirs and so this issue is certainly not related only to Indonesia.

Although the trade has now been resumed we still do not know what lies ahead in terms of the stability of our relationship with Indonesia (or other countries), when it comes to getting guaranteed humane slaughter for our off-shore livestock.

Despite several visits to Indonesia by Agricultural Ministers and industry stakeholders and holding meetings and tours with their hierarchy, it has yet to be confirmed that they have witnessed an inspection of any Indonesian owned abattoirs in the process of slaughtering livestock.

The Pastoralists and Grazers' Association figures state that WA supplies approximately 40% of Australia's exports of live cattle, about 390,000 head were exported in 2009-10, which generates an export income up to \$330million

With these figures it is rational that a comprehensive study be undertaken with the view of having strategically placed abattoirs throughout the South-West, Mid-West and North-West of Western Australia. Ideally this study should also incorporate on-shore slaughterhouses and processing facilities and be complemented by a concerted effort in developing new markets for the WA beef industry.

Such a proposal would ensure the industry has a viable option available to them should there be disruptions to the industry like we have just experienced. The Western Australian beef industry must be in a position to protect itself should it again experience such a catastrophic setback to the industry. This industry should have a backup plan that will give them some insurance against industrial adversity.

This is not to say that strategically placed abattoirs would in any way be a replacement for live export but it is an amalgamation that could certainly work for the benefit of the industry.

It is not unreasonable to assume that in seeking a guarantee for the humane slaughter of our livestock (from all countries importing our livestock) we don't encounter this situation again in the future.

It would be opportune to develop training and development facilities in Australia for international abattoir workers so that proper slaughtering techniques that are endorsed to Australian standards can be instilled in those working in facilities overseas.

Western Australia is a state that has been dependent on this livestock trade, to the point that the ban almost crippled the entire industry and has certainly caused the financial ruin of some, if not many pastoralists. We clearly need to put an alternative plan in place if the industry is to survive another major cataclysm.

Yours sincerely

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