

14 July 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Senate Inquiry – Improvements in animal welfare for Australian Live Exports

I am writing this submission regarding Australia's continuation of exporting livestock to the Middle East, Indonesia and other parts of the world.

My personal reasons for making a submission into this inquiry are to make it abundantly clear what my stance is regarding this issue. I categorically state that I do not, in any way, support the live export of Australian animals to be slaughtered on foreign shores.

It is critical that the government recognises animal welfare as a priority in this industry, and that a permanent ban is put in place to allow domestic investments which will encourage new and improved facilities and employment in Australia. This would allow the exporting of chilled meat to overseas markets as a result, and would follow New Zealand's example where this practice has been taking place since 2003.

Animal welfare cannot be guaranteed overseas, despite all assurances stating otherwise. Australia has no legal jurisdiction in Indonesia and cannot possibly ensure that animal welfare standards are being met. Australian authorities and industry bodies have had 30 years to improve practices to a satisfactory level, of which they have failed to do. In many cases, as I will detail below, the relevant industry bodies have actually increased the significant stress and trauma caused to Australian livestock by funding and designing restraint boxes that significantly harm the mental and physical wellbeing of these animals.

Since the early 1980s, Australia has exported livestock to various countries across the world. During this time, there have been numerous exposés, private investigations and news reports on the practice as a whole. The practice of exporting livestock overseas has long been a contentious issue for those involved in animal welfare and the Australian community in general.

Despite being widely condemned by animal welfare organisations such as WSPA, RSPCA, PETA and Animals Australia, the Australian government has continued to export live animals to be slaughtered overseas. RSPCA Australia CEO Heather Neil described the industry as "the cruellest trade in Australia's history". Many news reports have featured veterinarians who have been present on export ships and categorically state that the animal welfare standards are beyond abhorrent; many veterinarians had reported these issues to the Australian government and other relevant industry bodies only to find their reports ignored, and/or the cessation of their employment.

On 24 May 2011, ABC's *Four Corners* program brought this issue to light once again; highlighting the cruelty being inflicted on Australian cattle in Indonesia. Similarly shocking footage was broadcast on national television in 2006 regarding the live export of sheep to the Middle East, particularly in Egypt; thus creating public outrage.

Fortunately, the trade to Egypt was eventually banned as Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) had admitted knowledge this cruelty was taking place. MLA have also admitted that they were aware that animal welfare standards in Indonesia were also significantly lacking. However, Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig lifted the six month suspension on live export trading after only five weeks. During the period of the suspension in June this year, Mr Ludwig visited Indonesia. During this trip Mr Ludwig was prohibited from entering any Indonesian slaughterhouse and was unable to guarantee or ensure any changes to the treatment of Australian livestock would be made. Despite this, Mr Ludwig lifted the suspension and assured the Australian public that animal welfare standards had been improved and that cattle would not go to the relevant abattoirs, even though he was personally not allowed to enter other abattoirs to ascertain their practices were any better. Mr Ludwig also failed to ensure that the Indonesian government would make stunning mandatory for all Australian cattle. Therefore, very few changes of significance have been made regarding the overall welfare of animals. Not to mention the fact that the condemned slaughterhouses only reflect a small number of the many abattoirs operating in Indonesia that have not been officially investigated by Animals Australia or other independent organisations that are not funded by interested industry bodies.

The relevant investigations in Indonesian abattoirs were carried out by Animals Australia's Campaign Director Lyn White, a former South Australian police officer and Director of UK-based Tracks Investigations. In March 2011, investigations took place in 11 abattoirs in Indonesia to document the treatment of Australian cattle. Of all those abattoirs, the same methods were being used to slaughter the cattle. The argument that this is not a widespread problem is not justified, as it is difficult to ascertain, or comprehend, that the 11 abattoirs Lyn visited were the only ones slaughtering animals in inhumane ways. These were simply the 11 abattoirs that Lyn visited; if anything, this shows that the problem of animal welfare in Indonesia is widespread and typical of everyday slaughtering practices. In *Landline's* online article 'Public opinion threatens live exports' on 14 June 2011, it states "Fourth generation vet, Nigel Brown represents Meat and Livestock Australia and LiveCorp in the Middle East. □ He admits few facilities in the region match the standard of the Jebel Ali feed lot and that animal welfare varies greatly across the 11 countries, which take Australian live exports. □"

Highly concerning is the issue of using Mark 1 cattle restrained devices, which were commissioned under the MLA/Livecorp program. Since 2001, 103 of these devices were installed in Indonesian abattoirs, the funding of which was assisted using more than \$1.2 million in Australian taxpayer funding.

On ABC's *Four Corners* on 30 June 2011, world-leading cattle slaughter expert and professor from Colorado State University, Temple Grandin shared her condemnation of the use of the restraint boxes. When asked what she thought of the general conditions of the Australian cattle in Indonesia she stated "the conditions are absolutely terrible. I mean you've got a box designed to make a [sic] cattle fall down. That violates every humane standard there is all around the world. Just absolutely atrocious conditions as far as the restraining and holding of the animal."

When asked for her response to Australian industry claims that the conditions are generally good, Temple expressed that this was "totally wrong". She went on to state that MLA have built restraint boxes that are not acceptable and that she was shocked that they had helped build and fund trip boxes that cause animals to fall, break their legs and struggle violently against ropes, while having water poured over them, and in some cases having their throats cut multiple times, their eyes stabbed and gouged and their general mistreatment, all whilst they were being slaughtered. Temple stated, "I think a company, a country like Australia, needs to be fixing this situation. What's going on over there is not acceptable."

Temple stated that the problem was equipment-based but also that the skills and behaviour of the workers in Indonesian abattoirs were highly concerning. A most notable quote Temple made was "this is clearly absolutely not acceptable for a developed country to be sending those cattle in there. And the thing that shocked me is a developed country built these really horrible facilities. And one of them was brand new and their name was all over the side of it".

It has been shown that the animals facing slaughter in overseas facilities face numerous and highly concerning issues:

- Being forced onto overcrowded, suffocating and dirty ships where their welfare demands are not being adequately met, as shown in veterinarian reports handed to the Australian government in recent years;
- Long distance sea transportation of animals result in stress, distress, injuries and illnesses in animals. In 2008, 34,974 deaths were reported for sheep travelling to the Middle East;
- One veterinarian on export ships is responsible for up to, and sometimes more than, 100,000 animals. Many are powerless to help these animals and are largely ignored by stockmen who often throw animals overboard or on lower levels of the ships—many of these animals are still alive when discarded;
- Every slaughterhouse investigated by Animals Australia breached international animal welfare guidelines (the OIE code)²—it can be guaranteed that these slaughterhouses were not the only ones performing in this manner, they were simply the ones that were investigated;
- Cattle experienced an average of 11 cuts to the throat with blunt or short instruments—many experiencing much high numbers of cuts;
- Animals are highly distressed being restrained in the restraint boxes and thrash significantly, causing injury to themselves;

- Animals are having water poured over them, creating fear and anxiety and causing the animals to be traumatised, struggle and suffer greatly;
- Cattle are having their legs roped so that when released from the restraint boxes they trip and break bones, smashing their heads onto concrete slabs;
- Many animals face torturous deaths where they are traumatised for up to 26 minutes or more before being killed;
- Cattle are having tendons cut, eyes gouged and other brutal and inhumane acts being done to them in an effort to control them as they struggle for their life;
- Stunning is not mandatory in Indonesia and the government are highly resistant to using stunning due to concerns over misuse, theft and other issues.

Despite assurances that Indonesia is expected to adhere to the international animal welfare guidelines (the OIE code), there is no legislation in Indonesia where penalties or consequences of animal cruelty are enforced. Furthermore, these world guidelines set a very low benchmark for animal welfare and are well below the standards set in Australia. Many practices taking place overseas regarding animal slaughter would be considered punishable by law in Australia. Once animals enter a foreign country, they are entirely subject to the customs and practices of that country. Many laws designed to protect animals overseas are not enforced.

Having written numerous letters to various politicians, including members from the ALP, Coalition, Greens and Independents, many excuses for the industry have been made. I would like to summarise these apparent justifications and refute them with the following arguments:

Federal Member for Wentworth, Malcolm Turnbull's letter stated "If we could have our way, Australia would only process, chill and ship packaged meat to other parts of the world. But there are some countries where that is not possible for cultural and practical reasons". The cultural reasons that Mr Turnbull and many other politicians are alluding to is the fact that Indonesian abattoirs are expected to practise Halal slaughter. According to tradition, proper Halal slaughter is practiced in a calm and peaceful environment where the animal is shielded from other killings taking place; the animal should be standing and calm at the time of slaughter. A cube of sugar is placed in the animal's mouth as one quick, sharp cut is made to its throat. This is followed by a prayer.

Quite clearly, this is not what is being practiced in Indonesia or other parts of the world; despite Halal slaughter seeming to be one of the major justifications for the brutal treatment of Australian livestock overseas. Furthermore, in June this year, the Country Liberal Senator for the Northern Territory, Nigel Scullion said "Australia has a significant Muslim population, which relies on our domestic meat trade using Halal slaughter practices for its dietary needs. And the most efficient and humane way of slaughtering cattle is by stunning them before processing." In his own words, Mr Scullion has said that Australia is quite capable of providing Halal meat to its own Muslim population. This meat could also be exported to Indonesia and other parts of

the world where this is necessary. The Muslim community in Australia has also stated that stunning is acceptable as the animal is still living, which is in tradition with Halal practice. However, the Indonesian government are reluctant to make this mandatory practice.

Leader of the Nationals Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Member for Wide Bay, Warren Truss' letter stated that "In many countries, especially in Asia and the Middle East, more than 90% of people live in towns and households where there is no refrigeration. The only way families in those areas have access to fresh meat is to buy products that was delivered to their community alive". I would like to state that many organisations, such as Food for Life Global, who provide food to such communities, actually provide vegetarian foods such as grains, pulses and legumes as these provide readily available proteins and are a much more viable food option to provide nutrients to people. They are also easily stored and will last communities a far longer time than the body of a cow. These communities often struggle to afford the prices of Australian cattle, and will rarely consume this type of meat for this reason. These households do not share the same eating habits as Australian society (one of the biggest meat-eating countries in the world) and their use of such meat is a rarity. It is a false assumption that these people are relying on Australian meat to survive. These communities are surviving on many forms of nutrition that can be stored readily and will provide them with food long-term, rather than the short-term sustenance a cow or sheep could provide. Restaurants, hotel chains and more affluent Indonesian's are paying for Australian cattle and have the necessary refrigeration equipment to store it.

This is further evidenced by the fact that New Zealand banned live exports in 2003 due to the immoral and unethical practices that faced New Zealand livestock and the many economic benefits that exporting chilled meat could provide. The New Zealand meat processing industry has become highly lucrative, and despite a short-term adjustment period to the ban, they have been able to maintain and improve the market accordingly. This completely refutes the argument of many Australian farmers, politicians and industry bodies who are claiming that chilled meat is impossible in such countries as Indonesia.

Another argument is that Indonesia will begin importing meat from Foot and Mouth infested countries, which will bring the disease closer to Australia. Aside from the very relevant fact that Indonesia intend to become self-sufficient and phase out importing livestock by 2014; when Egypt received a ban on importing Australian sheep rather than replace the trade with animals from other countries and risking Foot and Mouth infection, they imported meat from Australia. Australia is also the only country to export that doesn't have this disease on its shores. This means Indonesia could not possibly import live animals from elsewhere without fear of infection and are very unlikely to do so.

In 2010-2011, before a suspension of live exports was enforced, Australian beef exports to Indonesia dropped 9 percent. Furthermore, the Indonesian government has announced that permit allocations on beef exports would be restricted as the

country wishes to promote self-sufficiency targets by 2014. Chilled meat export figures to Indonesia, which have been claimed to be impossible due to lack of refrigeration, have maintained during the last 12 months. This information comes directly from Meat and Livestock Australia's website.

The Australian Agricultural Company (AACo) has also confirmed that it has raised \$60 million and a possible further \$30 million to invest in Australian abattoirs and facilities. It has stated that the company will build an abattoir in Northern Australia. Chairman Mr Donald McGauchie said "we think there is significant advantage in processing boxed beef ourselves and not being in the hands of others." He has also said he is confident about long-term demand for beef, "the world supply and demand curves for beef are diverging in the right way for the Australian red-meat industry, the demand is going up and the supply is going down." He also stated that AACo has more than enough money for the project.

If Indonesia intends to be self-sufficient by 2014 and Australian meat manufacturers such as AACo are confident enough to be injecting \$90 million into Australian abattoirs to meet increasing world-demands, then it makes perfect economic sense to be placing a ban on live exports. New Zealand have shown that it is feasible, and highly lucrative. Plus, Egypt has shown that countries will not simply find other countries to import from as Australia is the only country that does not have Foot and Mouth disease, so it is not a viable option to import from elsewhere.

Morally, however, the argument to ban live exports is abundantly clear. In 2010, the RSPCA and Animals Australia had approached Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig about the horrors occurring in Kuwait, regarding Australian livestock. However the Minister turned the issue over to the industry and failed to make any action himself, instead expecting the industry to self-regulate. It is this expectation of self-regulation that has seen the industry become so horrendously cruel to Australian livestock already, so this decision was completely arbitrary. Another issue is that animal welfare in Australia is left up to the same Minister, who is in charge of Agriculture. This is fundamentally problematic as the Agriculture Minister's primary stakeholders are the meat and livestock industry, and therefore animal welfare will always remain secondary to increasing profits.

On 7 June 2011, a press release from the RSPCA Australia and Animals Australia said "it's unconscionable that cattle will return to Indonesia with no guarantee that they won't be slaughtered while fully conscious. 'The Minister's announcement tonight doesn't protect animals from a cruel death. They could still suffer the pain and distress of throat cutting while fully conscious and that's not only unacceptable to the RSPCA it's going to be unacceptable to the Australian community,' said RSPCA Australia CEO Heather Neil. 'Cattle will be allowed to go back to facilities where these agreed 'new' conditions still don't require upright restraint, pre-slaughter stunning nor do they prohibit traditional roping slaughter where animals are forcibly tripped onto their side for the throat cut. 'If the government is serious about animal welfare then before any export permits are issued, and a single animal is put on a boat, stunning must be guaranteed. What is the point in 'supply chain assurances'

that actually don't assure a humane death for animals'."

Aside from New Zealand sending a message to the world that animal welfare is high on its priority list by banning live exports in 2003, Holland has also passed a bill that opposes the slaughter of livestock without stunning it first. The bill came in light of the same issues Australia is facing regarding live export, and that livestock in Australia are routinely killed without first being stunned. Minister Marianne Thieme of the Party for the Animals—the first animal rights party to win seats in national parliament—said the bill was a great honour and argued that the sparing animals needless pain and distress outweighs religious groups' rights to follow slaughter practices "no longer of our time". A solid majority of Dutch voters say they support the ban, and parliament voted for it by a margin of 116 for to 30 against.

The Dutch government's bill highlights a global effort to recognize animal welfare and make changes that reflect modern views of society and improve the standard of humane practices towards the slaughter of animals. By continuing the live export trade in Australia, the government is going to fall behind in the moral and ethical responsibility it has towards its animals. This is a far cry from the message we want to be sending to global communities worldwide in that animal welfare is to be recognised, respected and enforced.

Having volunteered for animal welfare charities, I have spoken directly to abattoir workers. These workers have admitted that Australia is lacking in its own humane treatment of animals for slaughter. Abattoir workers are paid for the number of cattle they slaughter each day, therefore many animals miss stunning, or go to slaughterhouses that are exempt from using stunning machinery. These animals are often tied up by their legs, which are broken in the process. Many who get stunned wake up during the cutting process where pieces of meat are cut from their body. This demonstrates a complete lack of animal welfare on our own shores, clearly showing that a major overhaul of Australian standards is necessary and further describes how important it is that we invest in Australian practices that we need to improve before we can even contemplate improving animal welfare overseas.

Sadly, many farmers I have come across do not hold animal welfare as a priority. This is despite the fact that these animals give their lives to provide these people with a livelihood. On one Facebook page titled 'Letter to Four Corners – The other side of the story' the lack of respect for animal welfare practices, and the prioritisation of profits is abundantly clear. On 8 July at 8.43pm, a former farmer called Bradley posted the following quote "Indonesia buy the stock off us, the Indonesians can do what they want with them, they can throw them off the boat and make them swim home if they want, they don't belong to us anymore." This truly reflects a lack of concern for animal welfare and showcases the importance that banning the live export trade has. Many, but not all, of those in the industry, who benefit from the slaughtering of cattle, don't show any care or consideration for the inhumane and brutal torture their animals face. This lack of empathy is startling and by continuing this trade we are reinforcing the view that animals don't deserve any kind of respect or humane treatment, regardless of species.

I acknowledge the fact that this issue is deeply political and complex. I understand it will have an impact upon Australian farmers and the meat and agriculture industries. I understand we have political relationships with Indonesia and the Middle-East. However, I do not believe that the recent suspension of live exports was an answer to securing animal welfare overseas. As mentioned above, New Zealand have shown that exporting chilled meat is a viable and lucrative option. Egypt have demonstrated its willingness to import frozen meat, and being a third world nation, it further emphasises that this is a very possible solution. AACo's recent investment in domestic abattoirs to meet domestic demands again negates the need for live exports due to economical reasons. And finally, the Indonesian government's expectation to cease the importing of livestock in order to meet its self-sufficiency targets again states that live export is not a sustainable economic solution for Australia's agriculture industry.

With careful planning the Australian government and the MLA should work together to improve practices in Australia. Investment is needed in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland to ensure that the industry is financially supported through the development of state-of-the-art facilities that allow for a less despicable slaughter of Australian cattle. This will support jobs and protect the industry from further fallout and damnation. Reports estimate that meat sales have dropped 20 percent since the footage was first shown on national television. The public are not supporting this industry because they are outraged and disgusted. The public want real assurances and permanent unquestionable change. Without proper action in banning live exports, the government and the meat industry itself will continue to see this kind of fallout from Australian consumers.

Australia should be aiming to lead the world by showcasing its own compassion towards its livestock, not falling behind in animal welfare standards. At the same time, Australia should not abandon its close neighbour, Indonesia. Australia should invest in coolrooms and facilities in Indonesia that can be easily maintained and used to store imported meat to allow for wide distribution within Indonesia. This will mean large initial costs at the expense of the relevant industry bodies, however, it will allow for Australian meat to be exported to Indonesia to continue the demand for such. In doing so, it is imperative that Australia immediately removes or withholds further development of the Australian-designed restraint boxes that have been widely condemned. If they are unsuitable to use in Australia, then why has the Australian taxpayer had to fund their installation in Indonesia?

Evidenced by the backlash from 11 Labour backbenchers, who support the cessation of animal cruelty overseas, and condemned Mr Ludwig's decision to overturn the six month suspension after only five weeks, a conscience vote is extremely necessary to pass the Hon. Andrew Wilke, MP, Federal seat of Denison and Senator the Hon. Nick Xenophon, Senator for South Australia's bill to parliament regarding live animal exports; as well as being able to vote for the Hon. Adam Bandt, MP, Federal Member for Melbourne's submission of a similar bill on behalf of the Greens party.

As this issue is primarily a moral dilemma faced by Australia's political parties, a conscience vote is imperative. The general public are hugely outraged by the lack of acknowledgement the government is providing on this issue. Many feel that the idea that our government is a democracy is quite ludicrous. Many, many Australians want to protect Australia's animals, and having a conscience vote of this matter is of vital importance if we are to consider ourselves a truly democratic nation. The major piece of evidence showing that Australian's support a ban on live exports is in the sheer number of people currently writing letters to various politicians to raise their concerns over this issue. Furthermore, this issue has seen one of the biggest public outcries in Australian history. Unfathomably, more than 230,000 people signed GetUp.org's petition to ban live exports within a fortnight of the *Four Corners* investigation being shown. This number reflects a massive public outcry over this issue, and the numbers of those in support can safely be estimated at being significantly higher still.

In summary, I must again restate that I do not support a continuation of live animal export of any Australian animal, under any circumstances, nor despite assurances from any political party or industry organisation. For economical reasons, for moral reasons, and to reflect societies view that animal welfare is a considered priority, the government must seek to end the reckless, unethical and inherently cruel practise that is the live export trade.

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