



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Our Ref: MNMC2010-10317

Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Chair

I write in response to the letter from Ms Julia Irwin MP, former Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions, of 22 June 2010, to the Hon. Simon Crean MP, former Minister for Trade, about a petition calling on the Australian Government to end the export of live animals. It was forwarded to the Hon. Tony Burke MP, the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, who was appointed portfolio minister on 11 September 2010, is now responsible for the matters you raise. Minister Ludwig has asked me to reply to your correspondence on his behalf. I regret the delay in responding.

The export sector is an important part of a vibrant and growing livestock industry. Its earnings reached a total of \$996.5 million in 2009, underpinning employment of around 10 000 people in rural and regional Australia.

The government recognises that the sector faces challenges and responsibilities different from those in some other export industries. Being part of the international live export trade means Australia can help improve the way it operates—benefiting not just our animals but those from other countries as well. The government and those involved in the live export trade are continuing to work on improvements throughout the supply chain.

From the beginning of 2008, the government approved projects worth more than \$2.4 million under the Live Animal Trade Program to further improve animal welfare in importing countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. For example, the program has supported upgrades in livestock facilities in the Middle East and Asia so that they meet international animal welfare guidelines.

The former minister announced the three-year \$3.2 million Live Trade Animal Welfare Partnership in 2009. Projects under this program are funded in equal parts by the government and Australia's livestock export industry. On 10 March 2010 the government announced funding for three new projects worth around \$1 million in total under the program. On 15 October 2010, Minister Ludwig announced further funding for four projects worth around \$1.1 million in total under the program.

The government has consulted scientists and animal welfare organisations like the RSPCA in developing the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL). They are regularly updated and are available at www.daff.gov.au/livestockexportstandards.

Several measures are in place to ensure transparency in Australia's live export trade. All livestock exporters must hold a livestock export licence issued under the *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997*. Under the ASEL all vessels carrying livestock must be accompanied by an accredited Australian stockperson and for all voyages to or through the Middle East a government accredited veterinarian must also be on-board. For all voyages the on-board stockperson or veterinarian must provide a comprehensive end of voyage report on livestock health and welfare during the journey. For voyages of 10 days or longer they must also provide daily reports.

In addition the master of the vessel is required to submit a report on the outcome of the voyage to Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA). AMSA and BSG investigate all consignments which record mortalities above a certain threshold, and a report on voyage outcomes is tabled in each House of Parliament every six months.

The government acknowledges that some people would prefer Australia to export meat rather than live animals. However, a 2008 report from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics concluded that restrictions on the export of live animals would not increase sales of chilled beef, veal or sheep meat. Instead, the countries involved would be likely to source live animals from elsewhere. The report is available at www.abare.gov.au/publications_html/livestock/livestock_08/LiveExports.pdf. Further information on the live animal trade is available on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website at www.daff.gov.au/livetrade.

I note that, when the committee has considered this response, it will be presented in the House and posted on the committee's website.

Thank you for providing the government with a copy of the terms of the petition. I trust this information is of assistance

Yours sincerely

Allen Grant
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Agricultural Productivity Division

19 October 2010