

Miss MA CLINCH,
30.11.2005
Ms Maureen Weeks
Committee Secretary,
Senate Rural and Regional
Affairs and Transport Committee,
Department of the Senate,
2600 Canberra, ACT

2005 National Animal Welfare Bill, :Re

,Dear Madam

Introduction .1

This is a welcome opportunity to provide community input through your committee to the National Farm animals are emphasised, rather than domestic animals, as more .2005 Animal Welfare Bill, .relevant to the work of your committee

Empathy with Rural Communities .2

We want to see .Many of us keep a special place in our hearts for regional and rural Australia In times .rural communities live on, and care about the wellbeing of families who live in the bush .elp sustain primary industry of drought our taxes h

Australian Society .3¹ s Ethical Values

How we treat animals is a sign of an ethical value which we, as human beings all share. It is a mark of the quality of our community, and of a shared belief of what is right and acceptable for people who call themselves Australian. Cruelty is the mark of societies that we cannot admire. If a society tolerates cruelty, it is a symptom of underlying sickness, and an inability to cope. Australia must be known as a nation with a heart.

4. Animal Welfare

I have had an interest in animal welfare for a long time, and keep informed. There are several competent organisations which do a fine job in this area. They should be congratulated for their dedication, rather than derided as merely Emotional¹. Indeed these organisations have demonstrated an enormous capacity for researching and documenting issues and events, often in the face of great unpleasantness.

The general media are now taking much greater interest, and so the public is being better informed about the real issues.

5. Animals seen as Economic Commodities not live creatures

The submission dated 7 October, 2005 from the Sheepmeat Council of Australia, Wool Producers, and the Cattle Council of Australia seems to be saying that export traders have the sole right to determine the conditions of the trade. It seems this should not be done by anyone representing the concerns of the Australian community. However, it is Australian animals we are talking about.

Self regulation by industry has not worked, and never will, if the only criteria for success are number crunching and profit. Codes of Conduct¹ fail in the face of an industry which is too big and impersonal. People feel free to detach real life personal responsibility and ethics, from economic benefit. Regulation must be exterior to the meat industry, based on wider community values, open, and publicly accountable.

6. Livestock Export

The Cormo¹ Express events awakened the general Australian community to some of the cruel practices associated with livestock export. People were outraged at animals being sent such long distances on ships, and at the savage way of handling and killing animals in many destination countries.

There is no going back. No tinkering with benchmarks¹ and best practices¹ will do. The simplest way to stop most problems is to limit live shipping time to three days. Then we need to be sure that the animals are there for an ongoing life, and that those receiving them know how to handle them humanely.

The industry claims that stopping livestock export would wipe out 9000 jobs (SCA, WP, CCA submission, p.3). How was this figure reached? Are these Australian jobs in the meat industry which would not continue if there was local killing, chilling/refrigerating and exporting? Are crews of foreign ships being included here? Does this include administrative jobs? Does this include any pastoral jobs? The industry should itemise these figures if it wants them to stand.

Livestock export is no good for employment in rural and regional communities. It is part of a trend of bigger scale heartless corporate farming. Animals are trucked such long distances to slaughter. So much has gone wrong as a result of culpability in this, in overseas countries.

Decisions are being made further away from the farm. Work is being de-personalised, so that rural values are lost. Even people are being undervalued, by working under such intense pressure, and something has to give. Killing should be done as close as possible to the farm. Local abattoirs would provide local employment. More halal butchers are available among refugees, and there is an accreditation system.

We do not believe that livestock export provides greater employment than local killing. Apart from abattoir work, we could expect office jobs, more use of road transport for local forwarding, or perhaps a rail line kept open, and chilled exporting. Slaughter in Australia allows for value added¹ meats, and therefore more local employment. The government has been advocating value-adding before exporting for more jobs.

I understand that some smaller transport operators are in difficulties because livestock export requires larger numbers of animals to be taken longer distances. This requires bigger transport firms. I have also heard that animals have been transported by land from Western Australian to the East Coast.

Treating live animals like commodities for economic gain is abhorrent. Centuries ago slavery was favoured by vested interests, until the community conscience stopped it by legislation.

We cannot accept that way of thinking now. We need legislation.

This is one big reason why the National Animal Welfare Bill is essential.

7. Pig Industry

The public has been made aware recently about cruelty in pig farming, especially in the confinement of sows, and the raising of piglets. People are better informed now about how meat reaches them.

Supermarket managers approached about cruelties in pig farming write that they are not concerned, as long as the Code of Practice¹ is being followed. In other words, the buck is being passed in the name of commerce. Deferring to a Code of Practice¹, that obviously is not working, is like washing your hands - in blood.

They must know pigs are being cruelly treated. Because an animal is being raised for food in a pen, where nobody can see it, does not mean that it can be cruelly treated. Working in this way dehumanises people too, and this is not good for families, or the community.

8. Egg Production

Battery cages should be banned within five years. A great deal of progress has been made with free range and barn eggs. The price difference per egg is so small, and the quality appears so much better, that people should be willing to accept the banning of battery cages, for the wellbeing of the hens.

9. Mulesing of Sheep

Recent international challenges to mulesing have shown how priorities can change with pressure. A legal target date for the phasing out of cut mulesing should be set for all parts of the industry.

10. Summary

Animal Welfare is a very important issue for the community. Unlike the various industries, which have peak bodies and paid officers to lobby Ministers and members, the community rarely has special opportunities to be heard. We thank you for this opportunity.

Many Australians are giving up eating meat, because of the cruelties involved in producing it. They will continue to do this, and teach their children the same. The government needs to act to curb the greed driving some meat industry operators to condone cruelty.

From a rural, regional and transport point of view, local abattoirs, with proper welfare standards, chilling/freezing meat, including halal meat, and producing value added meats locally need to be re-established.

Pigs and poultry should be raised with space, in barns and/ or on the range. Mulesing should be quickly phased out.

I support the principles of the National Animal Welfare Bill. Those who deal cruelly with animals must be accountable. Present cruel industry practices must be stamped out, for the sake of Australia's self respect, as a country in the 21st century.

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