

# Australian Greens – Dissenting Report

1.1 Following the footage shown on the ABC's 4 Corners program, the Australian Greens introduced a bill, the *Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011 [No.2]* and, on 16 June 2011, we referred the role and effectiveness of the Government, Meat and Livestock Australia, LiveCorp and relevant industry bodies in improving animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets to inquiry.

1.2 It was the Australian Greens who prompted this immediate and wide-ranging inquiry into the live exports industry and who have opened up the trade to parliamentary scrutiny.

1.3 While the policy of the Australian Greens is for the live export industry to end while the industry continues to trade, we want the highest possible animal welfare standard, which includes mandatory pre-slaughter stunning.

## **Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011 [No.2]**

1.4 The Australian Greens' bill will put an immediate end to the horrific treatment of Australian cattle in overseas abattoirs.

1.5 Since the ABC's 4 Corners program was aired, an episode aptly titled *A Bloody Business*, constituents from all over Australia, have been appalled and outraged by the footage of Australian cattle being subjected to cruel treatment. Australians are horrified to see eye gouging, kicking, tail twisting or breaking, as well as cattle experiencing an average of 11 cuts to the throat, whilst conscious, with one animal suffering 33 cuts to its throat.

1.6 The *Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011* amends the *Export Control Act 1982* to prohibit the export of live animals for slaughter. The bill provides definitions of live-stock and live-stock for slaughter to limit the application of the bill to live-stock, as defined in section 3 of the *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997* as cattle, calves, sheep, lambs, goats or other prescribed animals, that is intended to be exported and slaughtered overseas. The ban will be in place immediately, with no delay and no continued cruelty. My colleague, Adam Bandt MP, introduced the same bill in the House of Representatives in order to maintain pressure on the Government to take swift action to end the trade.

1.7 The history of live animal export mortalities, as outlined in submissions to the inquiry, show that there has been little improvement in animal welfare standards over the last decade. As outlined by Voiceless in their submission to the inquiry<sup>1</sup>:

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1 Voiceless Limited, Submission on the Senate Inquiry into Improvements in Animal Welfare for Australian Live Exports, 15 July 2011.

Notable incidents include:

- (i) the drowning of 1592 cattle in 1996 when the *Guernsey Express* sank en route to Osaka;
  - (ii) the deaths of over 67,488 sheep aboard the *Uniceb* in 1996 after the ship caught fire and sank in the Indian Ocean;
  - (iii) the deaths of 570 cattle (half of those on board) on the *Charolais Express* in 1998;
  - (iv) in 1999, 829 cattle died by suffocation when ventilation failed aboard the *Temburongon* on its way to Indonesia;
  - (v) the deaths of over 300 cattle from injuries sustained during a cyclone encountered by the *Kalymnian Express* in 1998 on its voyage to Indonesia;
  - (vi) the deaths in 2002 of 880 cattle (half of those on board) and 1,400 sheep on the maiden voyage of the *Becrux* as a result of overheating (despite the *Becrux* being a purpose-built live animal carrier);
  - (vii) the deaths of 5,500 sheep aboard the *Cormo Express* in 2003 when the Saudi Arabian importer rejected the shipload of 57,000 sheep on the grounds they were infected with scabby mouth. This episode continued for 3 months until the Australian Government persuaded *Eritrea* to take the sheep free of charge.
- (d) The standard of ships used in live export is predominantly unacceptable, with a vast majority being decades old, including the 43 year old *Al Kuwait* and the 32 year old *Al Messi*.

1.8 The continued and repeated occurrence of incidents such as these demonstrates why the Australian Greens advocate a ban on all exports of all animals to all countries.

### **Mandatory pre-slaughter stunning**

1.9 The Australian Greens believe that mandatory stunning before slaughter is an absolute minimum requirement.

1.10 Cattle in Australia are stunned prior to slaughter, including those cattle for the halal-certified export market, but in Indonesia less than 10% of cattle are stunned before having their throats cut, meaning the vast majority of cattle are fully conscious when their throat is cut.

1.11 The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) guidelines establish minimum standards for developing countries. OIE guidelines allow practices which would be illegal in Australia to take place in foreign markets to those unlucky Australian animals which are subjected to live export.

1.12 The OIE guidelines do not require animals to be stunned before slaughter. The OIE guidelines do not prevent roping, tripping and casting of animals.

1.13 As Temple Grandin said when interviewed by Four Corners reporter Sarah Ferguson, – *it's... absolutely wrong to have a box where you trip an animal down*'. Ms Grandin was – *shocked to see that Meat & Livestock Australia's name was all over the side*' of the boxes.

1.14 The evidence collected by Animals Australia and RSPCA shows that the Mark I cattle restraint devices, which were commissioned under the Meat and Livestock Australia & LiveCorp program, facilitate Australian cattle being subjected to cruel practices. The industry program installed 109 of these devices in Indonesia abattoirs since 2001 and was subsidised to the tune of \$1.2million in taxpayer funds. The restraints enable a method of slaughter that trips the animals onto their sides, allowing their throat to be cut. As Animals Australia and the RSPCA state:

footage shows terrified animals falling violently onto a sloping concrete slab and during the process of trying to get up crashing their heads and faces against the sharp edge of a concrete blood drain. The force of these blows has chipped away at the cement and has been known to break jaws.

1.15 Indonesia has no domestic animal protection laws to enforce mandatory stunning or OIE guidelines, and enforcement of standards in over 4000 slaughter locations across Indonesia will be near impossible and very costly. Indonesia is already a signatory to the OIE and Australia has to date failed to ensure Indonesia complies with the guidelines.

1.16 Progress towards mandatory stunning is slow. The Committee heard that there are 7 abattoirs in Indonesia stunning and there is no timeline for the process to be rolled out to all abattoirs<sup>2</sup>. The Farmer Review recommendation that there be greater use of stunning falls far short and the Greens believe the review should have found that stunning of animals before slaughter be compulsory.

1.17 As indicated by the World Society for the Protection of Animals in their submission to the inquiry, Australia should, in addition, require cattle to be stunned in an upright position and to be restrained for stunning in a well-designed and well-maintained stunning box or conveyor restraint system.

## **The live export industry**

1.18 Both MLA and LiveCorp have failed to adequately monitor or improve animal welfare practices in foreign markets to which Australian animals are shipped. The Greens believe it is implausible that MLA or LiveCorp were unaware of the animal welfare issues in Indonesia, including the failure of facilities which were slaughtering Australian cattle not meeting OIE standards. We agree with the committee's view that the industry must review the delineation of authority and

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2 Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 20 September 2011, p.8.

strengthen communication channels between government, stakeholders and the community.

1.19 The Government must play a greater regulatory role over the industry to ensure that the animal welfare standards which Australians expect are met. It is crucial that the Government take an active and hands on role in the implementation of any traceability systems, including the auditing of such systems. This compliance and audit role must not be left to third parties.

1.20 Ultimately, the Australian Greens believe there is no way to implement safeguards that can guarantee the humane transport and slaughter of animals in overseas markets and so do not believe that the implementation of a traceability system will adequately protect Australian animals from cruel treatment.

1.21 The Australian Greens propose that we need to look at how to improve and increase processing in Australia to support local producers and jobs. The community benefits of processing meat in Australia have been underestimated for too long and are being talked down by the live export industry. An ACIL Tasman report in 2009 found that the phasing out of live sheep exports would have a minimal impact of farmers. A 2010 report, commissioned by Australia's leading meat processors, found that live cattle exports compete with and undermine Australia's domestic beef industry leading to lost processing opportunities in Australia.

1.22 Processing animals in Australia protects them from inhumane treatment and ensures our laws and standards regarding animal welfare can be upheld.

1.23 The Australian Greens have previously indicated we believe compensation for the suspension of trade, for farmers and other businesses including transport operators, could be considered in certain circumstances. We understand that some farmers and other businesses have been more adversely affected than others and as such any compensation paid should be considered on a case by case basis. Suitable sources of funds for any compensation payments might include the \$40 million Red Meat Advisory Council or from the \$3 million levy which MLA collects from producers.

### **The process of the inquiry**

1.24 The Australian Greens reject Senator Back's comments with regard to the ABC's journalistic integrity and the integrity of Animals Australia and the RSPCA. There is no doubt that Four Corners and Animal Australia substantiated the veracity of the footage they collected in Indonesia. It is disappointing that the inquiry was distracted by these comments rather than focusing on the industry and animal welfare.

### **Recommendation 1**

**1.25 The Greens recommend that the Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011 [No.2] be passed.**

**Recommendation 2**

**1.26 Pre-slaughter stunning should be mandatory at all abattoirs where Australian livestock is slaughtered.**

**Senator Rachel Siewert  
Australian Greens**

