

## Dissenting Report from Senator Xenophon

1.1 The committee has made reference in its report to the previous inquiries and reviews held into the live export market, and the various recommendations that have arisen from these. During the hearing on 10 August, the RSPCA also gave evidence that the MLA reports in 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 all raised significant animal welfare concerns about the treatment of Australian animals at the point of slaughter. The RSPCA also gave evidence that they had previously contacted the Minister's office with their concerns relating to the situation in Indonesia, but no adequate action had been taken. Indeed, it seems that the RSPCA has raised serious animal welfare concerns with successive Australian Governments over the last two decades, and adequate action was not taken.

1.2 It is very concerning that it repeatedly requires media stories and public outcry (both this year and in the past) to expose bad practices overseas and bring about changes in the industry. This reactive model under which the Government and peak bodies seem to operate leaves Australian producers repeatedly in the lurch.

1.3 In Australia, producers have high standards of animal welfare, and act in good faith when it comes to live exports. They do not deserve to have their livelihoods put at risk because of regulatory and planning failures.

1.4 There have been serious failures in the regulatory processes, and Australian producers have been let down. During the hearing on 2 September in Katherine, Mr Markus Rathsmann of Mount Ringwood Station and Manager of Gulin Gulin Buffalo Co expressed his concerns with MLA's activities, stating:

The investment in Indonesia has been totally inadequate for the amount of levies that we pay. We have to remember that Lyn White did the photography in Egypt six years ago. So it is not that we did not know about it.<sup>1</sup>

Serious questions need to be asked about why the live export industry is not appropriately regulated and monitored in the actual export markets.

1.5 The Government also needs to consider adequate compensation packages for producers. Several witnesses raised issues such as the cost of aviation fuel for helicopters or the need for tarpaulins to cover and protect feed stocks. In addition freight subsidies for cattle to be brought to southern markets must be considered. These essential expenses are not currently covered under the existing compensation scheme.

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1 Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2011, pg 14.

1.6 The existing scheme is also woefully inadequate when it comes to covering the real costs faced by producers. Compensation in the tens of thousands of dollars is clearly not sufficient when it is not uncommon for costs to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Australian producers should not be out of pocket given that they have acted in good faith and adhered to the high standard of animal welfare practices in Australia.

1.7 The OIE standards for animal welfare were consistently referred to throughout the hearings as the benchmark standards. However, it is important to note that these standards do not incorporate stunning of animals immediately before slaughter.

1.8 In the Four Corners program transcript, Dr Temple Grandin was shocked at the conditions faced by Australian animals in Indonesian abattoirs, and the MLA's role in designing the Mark I boxes. She says:

The conditions are absolutely terrible. I mean you've got a box designed to make a cattle fall down. That violates every humane standard there is all around the world. What I want to know is why is Meat and Livestock Australia's name on the side of this chute?<sup>2</sup>

In her submission to the committee, she writes:

The cattle handling shown on the videos from Indonesia shows animal abuse. Cutting tendons and hitting cattle is not acceptable<sup>3</sup>.

1.9 Dr Grandin is a world-renowned expert in animal welfare, and has consulted widely with the industry on incorporating humane slaughter processes. The industry and Government should consider her comments carefully.

1.10 The Government should also consider the need to make pre-slaughter stunning compulsory in all Australian abattoirs, with not exceptions.

1.11 In relation to the phase-out period of three years currently included in the *Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011 [No. 2]*, it is now apparent that this period should be extended to the extent necessary (following consultation with the industry and the RSPCA) to allow the industry to make the necessary transition to processing meat in Australia and ending live animal exports. (The transition period for cattle may need to be longer than for sheep).

1.12 The Government must support the industry and producers through this transition with adequate compensation and funding for the necessary infrastructure, to progressively reduce the industry's dependence on live exports.

1.13 A comprehensive and independent study needs to be undertaken into the best way for this transition to take place. Cattle producers in particular would hopefully

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2 *Four Corners* transcript, available: <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2011/s3230934.htm>

3 Submission 411, pg 1

welcome the greater security of alternative markets within Australia for their animals, rather than having such a heavy reliance on just one or two overseas live export markets.

1.14 During this transition period, the regulatory oversight for the treatment of Australian animals overseas needs to be greatly improved. All supply chains must be fully accountable, and each animal should be able to be traced from the point it leaves the producer in Australia until the moment of its slaughter. There also needs to be independent Australian officials on the ground with full powers to monitor and inspect feedlots and abattoirs, both with and without notice.

1.15 No one disagrees that the treatment of animals witnessed in the Four Corners program was abhorrent. However, past events have repeatedly shown that animal welfare issues continue to occur in export markets. This is not acceptable, and we need to consider what impact the failure to adequately deal with these issues could have on Australia's international reputation.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**1.16 That the Government, industry and the RSPCA work together as a matter of urgency to ensure supply chain security in all of Australia's live export markets.**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**1.17 That the Government, industry and the RSPCA work together to ensure pre-slaughter stunning is required for all animals in the domestic and live export markets as a matter of urgency.**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**1.18 That the Government and industry consult with producers in relation to significantly overhauling and improving the current compensation packages.**

#### **Recommendation 4**

**1.19 That the *Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011 [No. 2]* be passed, subject to a reasonable extension of the live export phase out period, following consultation with industry and the RSPCA.**

#### **Recommendation 5**

**1.20 Further to Recommendation 4, that the Government commission an independent and comprehensive study into how the industry can be restructured to support processing of all animals within Australia.**

**Senator Nick Xenophon**

