

## INDONESIAN ABATTOIRS — LIVE CATTLE TRADE SUSPENSION

### *Statement*

**HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural)** [5.26 pm]: A couple of my colleagues on this side have already spoken on the issue of the suspension of live cattle trade to Indonesia; such is the gravity of the situation, I feel compelled to add to the information that they have imparted in this house. The suspension of this trade and the proposed bills by the Greens and Independents in the federal Parliament are the greatest threat to agriculture this state is likely to face since the Great Depression. Diplomatic relations between Australia and Indonesia have reached the level where the Indonesians are saying that they will not accept the cattle if the suspension is lifted. Members need to remember that Indonesia accepts from this state not only cattle, but also large quantities of grain. Two grain vessels ply between here and Indonesia on a weekly basis. If the grain trade and live sheep trade are also suspended, Western Australian agriculture will be in a dire position and thousands will be put out of work—families that supply the industry with all its requirements.

I touched base with the minister's office this morning and it informed me that there are 700 abattoirs in Indonesia, 50 of which kill Australian cattle and 11 of those complied with all the requirements for abattoirs that are needed by this country from an animal welfare perspective. Most of those 11 abattoirs use stun guns and four are of a world standard and kill at least 100 000 cattle that come out of the north west. I question the balance in the *Four Corners* program, because that was not apparent. What we saw on the *Four Corners* program was shocking and confrontational and upsetting. I have yet to speak to a producer of any animal who was not very concerned about what they saw. However, the reality is that a number of abattoirs in Indonesia meet our welfare requirements. The *Four Corners* program did not spend much time at any of those abattoirs. I wonder how many abattoirs that did not meet our requirements were visited by the Animals Australia activist who took the camera shots that we saw on *Four Corners*. I wonder how many abattoirs the activist visited to film but at which she could not find any bad behaviour or something underhanded taking place. None of that was stated in the program. I believe that the activist found an abattoir that was operating in an unconscionable manner and filmed that to fulfil her anti-export agenda.

Some of the things that we saw were restraint boxes. I do not have the time to explain what a restraint box is for those who did not see the program. In reality, a restraint box requires two pieces of strong rope of a specified length to be tethered to the animal's lower legs. The restraint box is opened and the animal is cast on its side and dispatched by the workers. Livestock Australia tells me that its inspectors have been to Indonesia and seen this operation take place on many occasions, with the animal put down within 10 seconds of its head being restrained. On the *Four Corners* program, we saw animals coming out of the restraint box with only one leg roped. And with only one leg rope, the animal is not restrained, but moving and writhing and posing a danger to the operators, let alone anybody else present. On one occasion, we saw an animal with a partially cut throat get loose in the abattoir. Looking closely at the film, it is possible to see somebody re-tether the animal's leg rope. My question is: Why would an Indonesian worker who does this work every day endanger himself when having to get up close and personal with these animals that weigh 700 kilograms to 800 kilograms? Why would those workers work in the conditions filmed? If a worker who is the prime breadwinner for the family is injured or killed, it is the family who will suffer because there is no welfare system in Indonesia. These are the questions that came to my mind after watching the program.

I hesitate to say this, but I question the validity of what we saw as a depiction of what regularly happens in these facilities. I also question the anti-animal export campaigners or Animals Australia's intent as they purport to support animal welfare. Animals Australia went to Indonesia to film these activities four months ago—that is when the filming took place—and the industry asked to see the film so that it could rectify the issues it was not aware of. Why was the film not handed over? For four months, these people let animals continue to suffer for an agenda that I cannot comprehend.

As an ex-farmer and as a producer of animals, I know I speak on behalf of all farmers in Western Australia when I say that we are very concerned about animal welfare. Animal welfare is the forefront because if an animal is suffering, it does not grow properly, it does not put on weight and, yes, it has no financial benefit to us. Therefore, I ask again: why did the animal welfare activists not go to the industry at the time and support it to find a solution to rectify the problem? They had ample opportunity to do that, but did not. If they were really concerned about animal welfare, that is exactly what they would have done. Industry has spent millions of dollars and growers have spent millions of dollars through levies to ensure that the Indonesian and Middle East buyers of our stock slowly improve their animal welfare habits. That has taken place on an annual basis. We are talking about cultures that view animals as we view insects, but they have come a long way. However, if we stop this trade, as has now happened, the vacuum will be filled by animals from other countries and the animals from those countries will suffer as much as the animals from Australia supposedly suffer. In fact, I would suggest that

the animal welfare education programs that we finance from this country will stop all together and animal welfare will regress to what it was 100 years ago.

I am not sure what Animals Australia's agenda is. I suggest that it is to raise, to some degree, a political profile for it and the parties it goes hand-in-hand with. A number of members in this house represent regional Western Australia. We have heard from Hon Ken Travers and the Hon Brian Ellis about —

**Hon Sue Ellery:** Hon Ken Baston.

**Hon JIM CHOWN:** Hon Ken Baston. Why do we do that? Ken, you have to change your name!

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** That was a terrible thing to say.

**Hon JIM CHOWN:** My apologies, Hon Ken Baston.

A number of the members in this house who represent regional Western Australia have voiced their concerns in conversations in the corridors about this issue. I would like to hear what another member from the Mining and Pastoral Region, Hon Robin Chapple, has to say about this, because his side of politics is causing these problems—and of course the Gillard government also is.

I have two minutes left. I encourage Animals Australia and anybody else concerned about the welfare of live exports from this country to work hand-in-hand with the industry and not against it, because that will provide a positive outcome for the welfare of animals that are on sold after we deliver them at port overseas. I will close by saying that Mr Ludwig's decision on behalf of the Gillard government is just another dysfunctional decision. This is a government that is against beef exports, along with coal, gas and iron ore, and a number of these commodities are produced and exported by Western Australia. Ms Gillard has virtually gone to war against Western Australia, which only confirms that the federal government is totally dysfunctional and incompetent. I look forward to the new Senate make-up, and the sorts of outcomes that will be achieved by the federal government on behalf of all Australians.