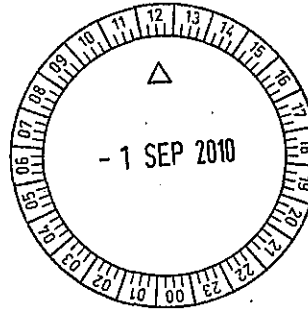


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Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Perth, WA 6000

Dear Mr Ellis

Re: Petition No 83- Live Animal Trade

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on the issues raised in **Petition No. 83- Live Animal Trade**, submitted by People Against Cruelty in Animal Transport (PACAT) and tabled on 23 June 2010 in the Legislative Council.

The petitioners ask the committee to investigate the trade with a view to recommending a timeframe within which it can be permanently discontinued. It isn't the first time this request has been made. In fact, the original recommendation to phase out the trade came from an Australian Senate inquiry in 1985. In Western Australia, this issue came to the attention of the Legislative Council through a petition of approximately 20,000 signatures in 1996, and at that time, I was the President of the People Against Cruelty in Animal Transport, Inc.

However, never before has the case for a phase-out timeline been so strong, or the evidence so compelling. I draw the committee's attention to the release last year of two reports:

- **The value of live sheep exports from Western Australia.** A review of adjustments that would be required if live sheep exports from WA ceased. Prepared for the RSPCA Australia. ACIL Tasman. March 2009.
- **Australia live sheep exports.** Economic analysis of Australian live sheep and sheep meat trade. Prepared for the World Society for the Protection of Animals. ACIL Tasman. September 2009.

I acknowledge that committee members must consider the implications for all West Australians when considering this petition. The most recent ACIL Tasman report (September, 2009) clearly articulates the dilemma facing decision makers:

...cessation of the live export trade, particularly without notice, would be costly to those currently engaged in it. This is the reciprocal nature of the problem: continuation of the trade causes concern for the welfare of the animals; while ceasing it reduces the return to businesses involved and potentially the contribution to the livestock industry as a whole makes to the economy...

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PACAT has presented the committee with convincing arguments about the cruelty to animals that is inherent in exporting animals live. It is true that animals shipped from Western Australia are subject to considerable suffering during shipment. The journey from Fremantle to the Middle East takes around 2-5 weeks making it the longest journey that animals have to endure in the world. Animals exported from Australia may be slaughtered in a manner that would not be considered acceptable in our own country. Further, legislation covering road transportation and loading of animals is not being adequately policed.



The animal welfare argument is clearly articulated and is difficult to refute. Now, for the first time, we also have a well articulated strategy for addressing the other side of issue: namely how to minimise the economic impact of stopping the live animal export trade on farmers and the broader community.

The ACIL Tasman reports detail the necessary adjustment to ensure a smooth transition. It has been proposed that the least cost way of reducing the externalities of the live sheep trade from WA is to increase the level of substitution between processed sheep meat and live sheep. However, the costs of adjustment are highly sensitive to the time of cessation of the trade. In order to minimise the impact on the economy and to provide sufficient time for sustainable adjustments to be made, the authors of the report support a phase out plan over at least two but not more than five years.

While it may be tempting to criticise the ACIL Tasman reports as being theoretical, we can also look overseas to see how reductions in the live animal trade have impacted on their farmers and their economy. NZ has effectively stopped the live export trade mainly as a result of stringent animal welfare requirements causing the practice to be uneconomic. NZ meat exports account for 13.2% of its exports compared with Australia whose meat exports comprise 3.2% of exports. These figures demonstrate that NZ has a greater dependence on meat exports than Australia, yet they successfully stopped live meat exports. This experience shows that where live meat is not available importing countries will substitute it for packaged meat.

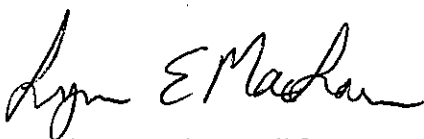
Australia has had comparable experiences when live exports have been stopped to specific destinations in the past. In 1991-92 following a ban on Australian live exports in 1990, Saudi Arabian imports of processed sheep meat from Australia increased from 7,900 to 25,122 tonnes (an increase of 318 percent). Similarly, Egyptian imports of Australian sheep meat rose by 300 percent between 2002-03 and 2005-06, when Australian live sheep imports were halted.

I acknowledge that the Australian Government has invested many resources in recent years improving transport conditions for animals exported live as well as improving animal welfare practices in the countries that the animals are being exported to. The Commonwealth argues that packaged meat is not an adequate substitute for livestock and that if Australia ceases exporting live then trading partners will buy from other countries who do export live animals. Even if this were the case, I argue that because the moral argument is so compelling, community sentiment is so strong, and achievable strategies have been identified to minimise the impact on Australian farmers in the context of the already declining sheep meat industry, then a decision should be made to stop this practice altogether.

Over the years, expert opinion opposing the trade has increased. If the committee were to inquire into the terms of the petition, it could consider inviting comment from the following organisations: The Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU), the abattoir industry including Roger Fletcher and V&V Walsh, the RSPCA Australia, Animals Australia, Compassion in World Farming, the City of Fremantle, Dawn Lowe of Animal Angels, PETA, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFA) and the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I look forward to discussing the points made in this submission in more detail with the committee.

Regards



Hon. Lynn MacLaren MLC
Greens spokesperson on animal issues
Member for the South Metropolitan Region
31 August 2010

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