



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Live Animal Exports

SPEECH

Monday, 20 June 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Entsch, Warren, MP

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Mr ENTSCHE (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (19:11): I rise to speak on this motion. There is much in what the member for Fremantle has said that I agree with. I am somebody who has had quite considerable experience in the cattle industry and I still have an interest in it. I agree that stunning is the most appropriate way of processing and slaughtering these animals. I too was absolutely gobsmacked when I saw the types of killing boxes that were shown on that program. To me, they are totally inappropriate and, given the technology that is readily available, even on my place, where I restrain cattle with a compression crush and what have you, it beggars belief that that has not been implemented over there. So those sorts of questions need to be answered. However, there are already seven abattoirs that I am aware of in Indonesia that have all of those facilities—stand-up slaughter, stunning and the whole lot—and they process a very significant number of cattle.

It is this knee-jerk reaction. As I have said before, I have no issue with the first decision made by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in stopping these animals going into abattoirs that do not comply, but the next step is the major issue in that we now have thousands and thousands of animals stranded in stock export yards, with nowhere to go. We have to address this quickly.

I note that some of those who are arguing for the closure of the live export trade have said, 'Why don't we just slaughter them, freeze them and send them away?' For anybody who has no understanding of the industry I suppose that is a logical argument to put up. But the reality is that we have only two export-processing abattoirs in northern Australia, from the Kimberleys right through to the east coast, and the types of animals they slaughter there certainly would not meet that criteria. We would love to have more. It would certainly value-add to the jobs and create jobs in our region. However, I suppose it is that middle-class thinking on the type of consumption of beef that would be happening in these destinations in Indonesia. The reality is that it is not just the electricity issue concerning chilled beef; you also have to understand that a lot of the people that access product from these cattle do not have the capacity to enjoy what I call the middle-class cuts—and, unlike in Australia, over there they eat everything from the hoofs to the horns. There is very little that is wasted. A lot of the product that is consumed from these animals over there is stuff that for us ends up in the pits and is turned into fertiliser, but it is the only product that these people can afford. The value of that animal is much greater in relation to what is needed in that community. It is impossible to contemplate any prospect of our cutting these animals up and sending them over as chilled.

There are abattoirs over there now that are fully accredited and that comply with Australian standards, which in fact are much greater than any of the international standards, so there is no reason why we cannot start this trade again tomorrow. There are cattle sitting there that need to go somewhere. There are animal health issues in those cattle that have now been confined for several weeks. There are ships there that comply in all aspects; we have feedlots over there that comply; and we have abattoirs over there that comply with Australian standards. There is no reason why trade cannot resume tomorrow. Those abattoirs that wish to process Australian cattle—or any cattle for that matter, because I think we should be out there trying to prevent any sort of inhumane treatment—need to be upgraded before they can access them. We have an NLIS tag tracking system that is very effective in Australia and that could easily be put into place so that those animals can be traced from the paddock right through to the plate. Any suggestion that it cannot is an absolute nonsense. The government is constantly changing its position; it has destroyed the authority of the minister and has left Northern Australians asking whether or not there is anybody in the Labor government who will ever stand up for them. I think it is absolutely appalling.