



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 Marino, Nola, MP

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Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (19:22): Australian farmers take great pride in breeding and raising healthy, quality, well-cared-for animals, and they were appalled by the footage of the mistreatment in some Indonesian abattoirs. But they also know that in Indonesia there are at least seven A-grade facilities right now and a further 18 B-grade facilities that could be accredited and could be processing animals. By working government to government and putting as many departmental and industry officials on the ground as it takes to bring these up to accredited standards as soon as possible, the decision could be made to recommence live exports to these accredited abattoirs. This is a time-critical decision that cannot wait six months. Limiting trade to only those that meet our animal welfare expectations will have flow-on effects in other abattoirs through training, traceability and processing.

The first ban was the right decision, but this second, total ban has been referred to as one of the most severe trade restrictions imposed by government on local industry in living memory. The government either ignored or certainly did not plan for the broader effects of their live export ban, and they did not even inform the Indonesian government or the livestock industry here. How many people were out of work the minute the ban was announced, and how many people are now in very dire financial circumstances as a result? This is not only an agriculture and biosecurity issue but an economic issue and a foreign affairs and trade issue, and we have offended our neighbours in Indonesia. It is a regional development and sustainability issue. It is an Indigenous employment issue and it is an issue for the thousands of families, individuals, contractors, and small and large businesses that are directly and indirectly affected both here and in Indonesia. Farmers right across Australia know that this decision has or will impact on them no matter where they sell their animals.

I went to the Boyanup store sale on Friday in my electorate. Farmers there were not only disgusted with the government's knee jerk total blanket ban; they are shaking their heads. They are also worried that meat processors will drop prices locally as a result. One farmer said to me, 'You know, if we had a problem in an abattoir in Australia, we would fix the problem, not ban the lot.' Unfortunately, the Labor government did exactly that and this decision resonates to many electorates right around the nation.

The member for Bennelong, who gave his speaking opportunity to me—and I thank him for doing so—asked me to raise the following points on his behalf. Australian live exports comprise approximately 10 per cent of the cattle slaughtered in Indonesia. The most humanitarian policy response on this issue would care for the slaughtering methods employed on all cattle in Indonesia, not just Australia's 10 per cent. Argentina and Uruguay are enthusiastic in their attempts to take Australia's place in the live export market. Neither of these nations have strong records on animal welfare. The long-haul shipping of live cattle from South America to Indonesia would only exacerbate the trauma, leading to significantly more animal cruelty compared with the short-haul trip from Northern Australia to our Asian neighbours. Argentina and Uruguay have considerable problems with foot-and-mouth disease, with Argentina currently vaccinating approximately 50 million cattle twice a year. Refrigeration facilities are rare in many regional areas of Indonesia, so the local slaughtering of cattle for same-day sale is the only option available to much of the population. Australian aid efforts were central to the eradication of FMD from Indonesia for more than 20 years as a buffer to protect our own high quarantine standards. The reintroduction of South American cattle will threaten Australia's biosecurity, potentially harming millions of Australian cattle. We provide \$558 million in aid funding to Indonesia. The member for Bennelong suggests that a proportion of this aid should be redirected for the purchase and installation of stunning equipment, and halal and other slaughtering equipment. This is a long-term remedy to satisfy all parties. We have practical experience of the use of licensing arrangements for the transportation of meat to insure ethical standards have been utilised. These are the words from the member for Bennelong.

I am very concerned, but I am not surprised, that the Labor government made such a city-centric decision. There is not one member of the ministry who lives in or represents regional Australia—not one who genuinely understands the challenges faced by regional communities and families and the people in this room every single day of their lives. The government does not understand. Western Australia supplies nearly 65 per cent of the live cattle sent

to Indonesia and is hardest hit—from \$47 million to \$60 million directly, and the multiplier effect makes it \$98 million to \$125 million, just in Western Australia. This is a very serious issue that needs immediate action.