



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Live Animal Exports

SPEECH

Monday, 20 June 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 20 June 2011 Page 85 Questioner Speaker Mr SIDEBOTTOM</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
--	---

(Braddon) (NaN.NaN pm)

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (19:1 7): I do not think the position of the previous speaker, the member for Leichhardt, is very far different from where the government stands at the moment. Coming from the very southern part of this nation, I fully appreciate the importance of the live meat export trade to northern Australia. I have just looked at some of the figures for Northern Australia. The cattle industry is worth around \$200 million a year—absolutely vital to the economy of the north. It directly supports more than 1,800 jobs—very important. It supports hundreds of Territory families who manage in excess of 220 pastoral leases. Pastoral properties in the north are almost totally reliant on the live export trade. There are 80 Indigenous land corporation properties across the Top End, including the Kimberley, who have a vital interest in the continuation of the trade.

I share the sentiments of the member for Leichhardt, whom I heard in this place last week, of how he along with Northern Territory cattlemen and most people in this country were appalled by those pictures we saw on the *Four Corners* program, and I heard the member for Leichhardt quite rightly condemn those. We have a situation where we have a significant trade which is important to many families in Australia, and the end result of that trade is that we cannot guarantee the welfare of the animals that we send—indeed, that we breed, we feed and we send—to Indonesia. That is at the nub of this whole issue. I join with the member for Leichhardt in saying I want this resolved as quickly as possible so we can do something about that. So does the minister. The minister has said that several times and is in Indonesia now trying to do something about it. He joins the industry and most people in Australia who want something done about it straightaway.

How did we get to this situation? The member for Leichhardt spoke about this earlier. I remember back to the time when we had live export trade of sheep and cattle to the Middle East that had to be suspended because of the cruelty to the animals involved and because Australia could not guarantee what happened to the welfare of those animals when they arrived there. That is at the nub of what is going on here. I can sit here and shout—as some others shouted earlier today—and call others hypocrites, but that gets us nowhere. For instance, I know that the member for Page, who is

very passionate about this, raised this issue in March, talking about the welfare of the animals. The member for Page in terms of the extent that they would go to to do something about it, but the member was raising the question of the welfare of those animals in March, and the parliament went about its business, as did the industry and all those involved, knowing that this would come to a head.

There has been criticism of this government on its decision to suspend the trade without giving a firm timeline about how we could resume it. I draw the attention of members in the chamber to the *Land* of Thursday, 16 June 2011 and an article by Mal Peters—no great supporter of our cause. Mal went on to send one in to the government, as those opposite and others may want to, but he also had some very serious words to say about Meat and Livestock Australia and its inability to take responsibility for its side of the chain of supply and what happens both from here and into Indonesia. I could sit here and rant and rave and cite that, but that gets us nowhere.

I noticed today an update on the industry animal welfare plan in New Zealand from Meat and Livestock Australia which talks about increasing stunning. The member for Leichhardt quite rightly said: 'That is what we should be doing; that is what we should insist on.' It does not in any way make halal suspect. That is what we should be doing: improved infrastructure, OIE compliance assurance programs and also traceability of cattle within Indonesia. I can tell you one thing: most people in the industry and most people in Australia want this traceability worked out now. They want it worked out as quickly as possible so we can get on with this. There is no easy solution except to say that we need to communicate this much better. (*Time expired*)