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NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION INC.

Member - National Farmers' Federation & Cattle Council of Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

BAN ANIMAL CRUELTY NOT LIVE EXPORTS

Pastoralists from the Northern Territory and Western Australia today called on the Australian Government to set up a high level task force to resolve the current issues with live exports to Indonesia.

A workshop in Katherine today attended by 100 pastoralists from across the Top End heard that the industry was devastated by the recent coverage and condemned without reservation the way animals had been treated by some Indonesian abattoirs.

"Families are distraught at what they have seen. The welfare of these families affects the welfare of their animals.

"They care for their cattle every inch of the way from their paddocks to ships to overseas feedlots. Producers want to get control of the whole process, right to the very end," said President of the NTCA Rohan Sullivan.

The workshop today said the number one issue for pastoralists was animal welfare and this was not achieved by banning live exports.

"We have a problem and we need help," Mr Sullivan said.

"If we are serious about stopping animal cruelty, we need to work in a culturally sensitive way with the Australian and Indonesian Governments to address the part of the system that's not working.

"Stopping exports will simply devastate the Australian cattle industry, farming families, regional areas, Australia's trade relations with Indonesia, Indonesian families who depend on the cattle industry and Australian food without making any difference to the issue that is at the heart of this whole debate, which is animal welfare," Mr Sullivan said.

"Nor should it be forgotten that the pastoral industry is one of the few employers for Aboriginal people in remote areas," he said.

"If we stop exports to Indonesian, we are walking away from the millions of dollars that Australian producers have invested in infrastructure, training and improved animal husbandry. This doesn't help the cattle who will continue to be processed, just opens the door to imports from other countries which may not adopt our standards or spend what we do on animal welfare," he said.

"Nor will we fix the problem by walking away from our Indonesian relationships," he said.

Mr Sullivan said producers felt strongly that stunning should be compulsory and many were prepared to include a "no stun no deal" clause in contracts.

"They are prepared to go out on a limb and lose money to do this.



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"The NT Cattlemen's Association supports this stance and needs Australian and Indonesian Government support to enforce it. The answer lies in high level discussions between the Indonesian and Australian Governments to implement better animal husbandry standards," he said.

"We have heard from a number of religious leaders that suffering to animals is not 'halal', it is just a reflection of the different stage of economic and social development in Indonesian.

"Rather than being judgmental, we need to build on the efforts of the Northern Territory Government and our own producers to build good relations with Indonesia and work in partnership with our closest neighbours to fix the problem," he said.

"There is no Plan B for this industry. If live exports to Indonesia are closed, families will be bankrupted and for what purpose? It won't make the slightest bit of difference to the welfare of animals being slaughtered in Indonesia," he said.

"The industry was also concerned that loss of control over the export industry could impact on biosecurity issues such as the introduction of foot and mouth disease to the region."

Today's workshop agreed to a number of priority issues, including a campaign to improve understanding of the industry and animal welfare issues.

Top priorities issues were:

1. Keep the industry open and lobby the Australian and Indonesian Governments to work together to resolve the issues in a culturally appropriate way.
2. Prepare an economic 'ripple map' that reminds Australians of the devastating economic impact on cattle families, regional centres and Indonesians of halting live exports and the flow on effects to the whole live export and cattle industry across Australia.
3. Adopt a campaign called 'Ban animal cruelty not live exports'.
4. Educate the public about the high standards of the cattle industry and the enormous improvements achieved in Indonesia in the past 10 years.
5. All meatworks have to be accredited to the highest standards.

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Background information:

Members of the Northern Territory cattle industry successfully manage 45% of the NT. The pastoral industry generates more than \$400 million in direct benefits for the Australian economy, with flow on benefits worth around \$800 million. The pastoral industry accounts for over 60% of the NT gross value of Agricultural production.

The industry directly provides in excess of 2000 jobs annually. Indirectly it supports around 3000 jobs in related goods and services.