



Media Release

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Don't throw us crumbs: fix the problem

The Government was insulting the cattle industry by throwing it crumbs rather than fixing the problem of live exports, the Chairman of the NT Cattlemen's Association Rohan Sullivan said today.

"The feedback I have had from members is despair," he said. "The Government's announcement of what amounts to an expanded welfare program seems to be a massive admission of failure in its negotiations with Indonesia."

"The man on the street might think \$30 million is a big welfare cheque, but that barely touches the sides of the abyss we are staring into," he said.

"There should be 15,000 cattle going out a week, with \$10 million a week coming into the industry, instead we are slowly being bled dry," he said.

"The monthly wages bill alone for some of these properties is about \$27,000, let alone the cost of feed and fuel.

"People have been trying to hang on as their debts accumulate. Normally, the end of the Wet is peak debt season for the cattle industry and everyone looks forward to paying their bills as the cattle are mustered and trucked off.

"Instead, people are left in limbo, with enormous bills, interest costs accumulating, many are starting to lay off their staff, and none of us know where it's all going to end because the government is refusing to nominate any sort of timeframe to resolve the problem," Mr Sullivan said.

Mr Sullivan said the cattle industry had been despondent after listening to the Minister for Agriculture Joe Ludwig in Darwin and Mt Isa this week,

"People are getting really frustrated and angry because they are hearing the same thing over and over and they don't know what they can do to help rectify the situation.

"What is the Government doing to get the trade going again? Why aren't they working with the commercial interests in Indonesia to give them a chance to show what they can do to meet government's standards? Why aren't they signalling to the Indonesian Government that they are sorry for causing offence and want to work with the Indonesians to get this trade going again?" Mr Sullivan said.

Some Top End cattle have been sent to the cattle sales in Central Australia but not all sold and those that did fetched poor prices. A small number of cattle have been sent to alternative markets, such as the Philippines, but at "fire sale prices" Mr Sullivan said.

"As we have said all along, we have no Plan B. The Top of Australia is dependent on the live cattle trade and without it many producers and their suppliers will simply go broke," he said.

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