



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Live Animal Exports

SPEECH

Thursday, 20 August 2015

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Speaker Howarth, Luke, MP	Question No.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (11:06): One of the reasons why I put my name forward to run in the last federal election was the previous government's decision to shut down the live cattle industry overnight. I thought it was a terrible decision. It affected farmers. It affected exports. I had firsthand experience of its effects. At the time, I was travelling with my family up in Western Australia—on a six-month journey in a caravan—and I came across some of the farmers and exporters up there who were, overnight, dramatically affected income-wise by that decision. The only good thing that came out of that decision is that industry standards in this area have improved dramatically since then.

Some of the main issues that people write to me as the federal member for Petrie about are Australian agriculture, farming and animal welfare. Although we do not have a lot of farming, so to speak, in the Petrie electorate, people are concerned about our Queensland farmers, and Australian farmers generally, and the adversities they face, as well as animal welfare. I love animals. I have always been interested in the sector; I really am interested in what they do. But I do understand that animals are a vital food source for not just Australians but people all over the world.

Over the winter break, I had the opportunity to visit some people who are involved in the live cattle export industry and to find out a little bit more about it. It was a great experience. I visited Frontier International Agri, which was established just two years ago. They are a partnership focused primarily on live exports, bringing together a group of experienced meat and livestock people with many years of industry experience. I want to particularly thank Ashley James, who made himself available to me to take me out to the cattle yards to look at how the cattle are kept whilst they are in quarantine. I also had the chance to meet one of the vets who inspect the cattle before they are shipped overseas. He explained to me that, on journeys of above 10 days, the vet goes with them. On shorter journeys of two or three days, they have an accredited stockman. I thank Ashley James for taking the time to give me a better understanding of the industry.

I also had the chance to board the *Gelbray Express*, which is a ship basically built for live exports. I had a good chance to look at the conditions that cattle and other animals are placed in for these voyages. It was very good. It is a custom-made ship. There were food and water facilities, of course, and very good ventilation pumping through the ship on all levels all the time. It was a very interesting experience and I am pleased to say that, at least from the Australian point of view, we are world leaders when it comes to live animal export. The Australian live export industry is one of our most regulated industries. In fact, we have a world-class system and procedures in place which extend to every point of the supply chain.

I want to quickly touch on Animals Australia, on their billboards and so forth—the campaign that they use to put fear into people's minds that the industry is no good. I support Animals Australia in relation to free-range eggs, hens and so forth and also around piggeries, but this attack on live exports is dreadful because Australia is keeping conditions and standards high for the rest of the world. It is also a great export opportunity for our farmers. When drought is happening, we are able to ship cattle overseas at a weight of about 350 kilo. When there are good conditions here, we are able to fatten them up and make a lot more profit here. But it is also helping other countries like Indonesia. When they get the cattle, they are able to fatten them up to about 550 kilo and make a little bit of extra profit.

I also want to particularly acknowledge the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, who has doubled this industry and more since becoming the minister. He basically has a big 'F' for farmers engraved on his head, and 'E' for exports. He has the best interests of Australians at heart and I am sure the opposition also support the industry. (*Time expired*)