




Speech by

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LIVE CATTLE TRADE

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (12.15 pm): Two weeks ago today many Queenslanders woke up with a knot in their stomach. The previous evening they had seen on the ABC's *Four Corners* program graphic and disturbing footage of the processing of cattle in a number of Indonesian abattoirs. Like many Queenslanders I was shocked by the mistreatment of the cattle on the program. The LNP deplores cruelty to animals and we supported the decision at the time to suspend the supply of Australian cattle to the particular abattoirs using these inhumane practices.

Furthermore, the LNP considers ongoing advances in animal welfare outcomes as integral to its ongoing support for the live export of cattle to Indonesia. The LNP believes Australia is best placed to encourage humane practices in Indonesian abattoirs. The efforts of the Australian live cattle export industry have led to the introduction of stunning in some abattoirs. There is a long way to go to see the wider use of stunning in Indonesia, but there would not have been any progress had the Australian industry not been involved. No other country exporting live cattle spends money raised by levies on domestic producers to educate their customer in the humane treatment of animals. The only reason the Australian live export industry has any influence is that it is a preferred supplier due to the quality of the product. The LNP believes the live cattle export industry and the federal government need to continue to make the promotion and adoption of stunning a priority in Indonesian abattoirs.

A week after the *Four Corners* program was broadcast, the federal minister for agriculture, Senator Joe Ludwig, made a decision to suspend the export of live cattle to all Indonesian abattoirs regardless of practices they utilise. The live export of cattle is a major economic driver in North Queensland. The ban has serious ramifications on cattle producers, employees on properties, transport operators and businesses supplying and servicing the industry. Another week of uncertainty passed before Minister Ludwig yesterday addressed the issue of compensation. Minister Ludwig proposes to force the cattle industry to compensate itself by directing its industry body to use funds accumulated from voluntary levies collected for marketing and promotion and redistribute them to affected producers.

The full suspension of the live cattle export to Indonesia was an active decision of the Gillard government to close a major export market for North Queensland cattle producers. The Gillard government has created this crisis in the state's beef industry. The current crisis demonstrates that Minister Ludwig did not fully understand the ramifications of his decision to fully suspend the live export of Australian cattle to Indonesia. The Gillard government should accept responsibility for its decision and compensate cattle producers for the loss of this market. The Gillard government must also announce and outline an immediate plan to re-establish a controlled trade with Indonesia that makes cattle identifiable and traceable from the property boundary in Australia to the abattoir in Indonesia. There are abattoirs in Indonesia that meet Australia's expectations and there are producers in North Queensland capable of monitoring the movement of their cattle through the supply chain.

The extent of the Bligh government's response has been to set up a task force, supposedly to identify alternative markets. It is very disappointing that the Bligh government has made plan B its priority. Rather than admit defeat, the Bligh government should stand up for North Queensland cattle producers and demand that the Gillard government re-open a controlled export trade to Indonesia. There are too

many livelihoods at risk in this industry for this to be the best the Gillard and Bligh governments can offer. The live cattle export trade is a significant part of North Queensland's economy. The impact of an ongoing export ban will be enormous. The livelihoods of everyone working in this industry are in jeopardy. Premier Bligh and the state minister for agriculture should be fighting for the livelihoods of these Queenslanders.

The LNP does not believe domestic producers supplying cattle for export should be penalised because some Indonesian abattoirs use unacceptable practices. The ban on exports from Australia means Indonesia will source cattle from another supplier less interested and committed to encouraging abattoirs to adopt more humane practices. Small regional communities in Indonesia have no refrigeration capacity. The only way local people have access to fresh meat is to purchase it on a daily basis from a local wet market. There are those claiming abattoirs in Australia can accept and process these cattle. This is not true. In the first instance, the cattle are the wrong breeds. Secondly, the domestic market for beef would be flooded, reducing returns to domestic suppliers and impacting on the markets of substitute products such as chicken, pork, lamb and fish. If people are genuinely interested in animal welfare, they need to understand the best chance of cattle being treated humanely in Indonesian abattoirs is for the Australian live cattle export industry to continue promoting the adoption of stunning and other practices.