



## Live trade shames Australia

Chris DeRose

AUSTRALIA is a proud and beautiful country. The people are warm, progressive, well-educated and known across the globe for their outstanding hospitality.

Sadly, the world was shocked when we became aware of the horrific circumstances Australia's live export industry was willing to subject animals to, in order to provide them to the Middle East, South-East Asia and North Africa.

Images of Australian cattle being eye-gouged, kicked, whipped and tortured created an outpouring of rage across the globe.

We were stunned to learn that despite years of evidence documenting the cruel treatment of Australian animals in the Middle East, the live export industry has retained the unconditional support of successive Australian governments. Moreover, this support was in direct conflict with the views of the vast majority of Australians, who were appalled by their country's participation in this trade. Australia's willingness to sell animals to countries that fail to comply with international animal welfare guidelines has actively undermined the work to encourage animal welfare improvements there.

How can an industry that has been responsible for the suffering and deaths of countless millions of animals maintain government support and be allowed to continue?

Decent people across the world applauded the Gillard Government's suspension of the trade to Indonesia as well as the tabling of legislation to ban live exports. It was taken for granted that a vote in the Australian Parliament to end the trade would be unanimous.

We were, therefore, appalled to learn that both main political parties in Australia refused to support this legislation, despite overwhelming support from the Australian community.

The questions need to be asked: Why do the operators of an industry that brings such shame on Australia and is responsible for such suffering have a stranglehold over Australia's decision-makers? How can so few counter the opinions of so many?

Present initiatives by the Gillard Government to regulate this trade are all too little, too late and they are not working. Animals Australia recently released footage of the continued brutality even after the new framework to protect animals was put in place.

Despite promises from the Minister for Agriculture, Joe Ludwig, the Gillard Government has not made any progress in preventing Australia's animals from being tortured. The only way to repair the damage done is for the trade to be banned and, through doing so, to finally send the right message to importing nations: animals and their welfare matter.

To all of you united in opposition to this cruel trade, be heartened by the fact the international animal welfare community and all who are compassionate worldwide are with you. Our message is: do not give up!

Chris DeRose is the president and founder of Last Chance for Animals, a US-based international animal rights organisation.

reported that "almost half (46 per cent) of the richest 20 per cent of households in Australia – the richest people in one of the world's richest countries – say that they cannot afford to buy everything they really need".

Clearly this is nonsensical.

While the cost of living has risen in recent years, it has been more than offset by income growth. Disposable

incomes have risen sharply and Australians spend an increasing amount on entirely discretionary items.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, household spending on recreation has increased by more than 40 per cent since the mid-noughties and our expenditure on alcohol has risen almost as much.

In conflating lifestyle with

need, we increasingly resent paying for life's necessities, because we want to spend ever more of our incomes on the luxuries we think are essential.

Which is not to say everything smells of roses.

According to the Queensland Council of Social Services, nearly half a million people in Queensland live below the poverty line and more struggle to stay just

above it. But there are 4.6 million people in the state.

We need to change the debate. Public policy and political debate need to reject the idea there is a crisis of cost-of-living pressures for the majority of Australians. Politicians and the media should show leadership in helping us see that public policy is not just a question of "What will you do for my personal finances?"

Only then can government return properly to the substantial and long-term public policy questions of providing first-rate public services, world-class infrastructure and help for those facing genuine difficulties covering the basic cost of living.

Dr Joff Lelliott is state director of the political think tank The Australian Fabians (Queensland).

## follow state's extraordinary disaster

purpose. There was no flooding in the first wave but the sheer magnitude of the combined volume of water during the second January 2011 event led to the flooding. It should be noted flooding would have occurred regardless of Wivenhoe releases due to the significant flows down the Lockyer Creek and Bremer River.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) provided a professional service throughout the flood events and worked very closely with Seqwater and other organisations. But the science used by BOM was not good enough to use for flood release based on forecasts.

On January 8, the morning forecast predicted 25mm of rain for January 9, the afternoon forecast was adjusted to predict 80mm. The actual rainfall was 150mm. If Seqwater had undertaken

The volume of total inflow into Wivenhoe Dam during the event was 2,650,000 megalitres, or the equivalent of more than five Sydney Harbours' worth of water

releases based on the forecasts, it would have made the situation worse.

This disaster and others like it, experienced in Australia and around the world over the past decade, are signalling a warning for the way in which we manage water in this vast country. Climatic events are becoming more extreme and we need to have infrastructure, technology and skilled people to cope with whatever comes.

A new WSAA report, *Climate Change, Adaptation and the Australian Urban Water Industry*, released last month, supports this view and makes recommendations for urgent federal and state government action across the country.

The report found that although the Federal Government has invested well in programs that identify where water assets are vulnerable to

climatic events and in research programs such as National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, it needs to go further.

Having been successful in progressing new carbon price legislation for climate change mitigation, the Commonwealth should more urgently progress initiatives with the states to adapt to climate change and extreme events. That means a co-ordinated approach to planning, building and reinvesting in critical infrastructure, particularly for water and energy.

Wivenhoe, both the dam itself and its managers Seqwater, stood up to the challenge of an event twice the size of 1974 but will other infrastructure stand a similar test?

It is conservatively estimated about 30 per cent of the

underlying infrastructure Australia relies on for its water supply and sewerage may not be able to cope with these sorts of climatic events in the future, particularly in low-lying areas.

The estimated replacement costs of extreme event, exposed water assets is well in excess of \$100 billion.

The Queensland commission's final report makes recommendations on improving readiness for crises and response to emergencies that are relevant to all states and territories. WSAA will be examining them closely and urging governments to heed the warning of the 2011 Queensland floods.

Adam Lovell is the executive director of Water Services Association of Australia, which is the peak body representing government-regulated water utilities.