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MEDIA RELEASE

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Whistleblower vet removed for exposing live ex cruelty

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has ditched expert live export vet, Dr Lynn Simpson, at the request of the live export industry, after Dr Simpson made a critical report.

As the federal election looms, once again we see why a phase out of live export should be a focus of any party seeking government. For the second time in one week, the ABC's 7.30 program has exposed the serious and systemic problems associated with this troubled trade. This week's revelations focus on the highly questionable conduct of the government department responsible for both promoting and policing the trade.

ALEC (the Australian Livestock Exporters Council) has said that the damning evidence of cruelty on live export ships revealed by Dr Simpson is "past history" and everything has been fixed. Vets Against Live Export (VALE) disagrees, as their in-depth analysis reveals endemic problems with animal cruelty on ships which the live export industry suppresses by pressuring the vets it employs to stay silent.

Dr Sue Foster, spokesperson for VALE, said "It is disingenuous to suggest that the problems are fixed. Same exporters, same ships, same stocking densities, same welfare issues. The reports we have from live export vets show that the cruelty continues.

"Most recently, Dr Peter Calder was threatened by the Department with criminal prosecution after he was strongly critical of the state of cattle loaded for a shipment to the Middle East. The Department not only threatened him but ignored his recommendations, with the result that many of those animals died on the voyage. Before that, Dr Lloyd Reeve-Johnson reported many problems with a voyage, including an exporter throwing him off the ship; the Department took no action against the exporter. Earlier still, vet Dr Tony Hill blew the whistle about a serious mortality incident in the Middle East, but again the Department did next to nothing."

The censuring of Dr Lynn Simpson confirms the undeniable manipulation of the Department by the live export industry in order to hide its dirty animal cruelty secrets.

Simon Crean, from ALEC, has called for greater collaboration between the live exporters, vets such as Dr Simpson and members of VALE. VALE is sceptical that this will occur, and maintain that if the industry is serious about animal welfare there should be an independent vet on every live export voyage, and the whole industry should be overseen by an independent monitor.

Dr Foster said “Without a vet on each voyage the live export industry will continue to stagger from crisis to crisis and will continue to be publicly embarrassed by these sorts of revelations. Meanwhile, the animal suffering continues unabated.”

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