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G0010

Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Madam

RAIL FREIGHT USE BY THE AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK INDUSTRIES

I refer to Queensland Government Parliament Committee inquiry into rail freight use by the agriculture and livestock industries. The North Australian Pastoral Company Pty Limited (NAPCO) operates thirteen cattle properties across Queensland and The Northern Territory and Wainui Feedlot and Farm on the Darling Downs with a herd of 200 000 cattle. The followings comments are offered for the Committee's consideration.

NAPCO is a significant user of rail and for many decades has utilized the Queensland Rail network. NAPCO routinely transports circa 10 000 head of cattle per annum by rail. However in 2011, in excess of 20 000 head were transported by rail on the back of excellent seasonal conditions in 2010 and 2011. The rail network is unquestionably an important component in NAPCO's supply chain of breeding, growing and fattening cattle for slaughter at abattoirs located in Northern, Central and South-East Queensland for not only domestic consumers, but also export markets via the Port of Brisbane.

Rail is used in conjunction with road as an efficient means of transporting large numbers of cattle vast distances. For example, at times we need to exit up to 3000 head of cattle to slaughter from a single paddock. We currently are able to achieve this by using either Cloncurry and/or Winton as rail loading point with three trains departing at 48 hour intervals. Each train is 42 decks and hence we are able to utilize 7 x 6 deck unit road trains on a 24 hour turn-around from the property to the rail head and return. If we were unable to utilize rail in this manner, 7 x 6 deck road train units would need to be broken down into a minimum of 14 B-Double units by the time the consignment was travelling through Toowoomba and the turn-around would extend out from 48 hours to 96 hours, effectively doubling what we currently achieve in six days. Furthermore, apart from whether or not there are sufficient trucks and drivers to undertake such a movement, it would place extra burden on the road system, particularly the Warrego Highway west from Brisbane.

What the livestock industry requires is an integrated transport system that is cost competitive, timely and efficient that does not compromise the welfare of animals or public safety. There are definitely opportunities to improve both road and rail services to achieve the aforementioned outcomes to the benefit of industry, the Government and citizens of Queensland.

In closing, the rail network is critical to the Queensland Beef Industry with all stakeholders benefitting either directly or indirectly by its existence. If it was to either no longer exist, or exist in a reduced capacity, it would be at a significant cost to the Queensland economy.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue further should the Committee wish.

Yours faithfully

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Geoff Kingston

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