

Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.

Re: Petition No 13 – Shortage of Abattoir Capacity in WA From The Red Meat Action Group

Almost every town in the SW and wheat belt had their own abattoir and due to Govt (Health Dept) regulations all but a hand-full have been forced to close.

Over the past decades various State Govts have closed Midland, Robb's Jetty, Linley Valley and Katanning beef abattoir chains. All were State owned and nothing has been put back to replace them. In addition there have been a frightening number of other major abattoir closures, including the following plants... Clover Meats, Nebru Plains Works at N Dandalup, Borthwicks – Albany, Mt Barker Meats, De Monks – Manjimup, Kojonup Meats, Walshs Bsn, Geographe & Busselton Meats, Frys at Brunswick, Gardiners at Dardanup, Paynes at Elgin, in addition to works that are now only just processing at a fraction of their capacity ...

Roedigers at Northam and Geraldton Abattoir . All of these have been forced to close due to the cost of compliance with State Health regulations and age of the plants.

Not one new abattoir has been bought on line in the past 4 decades despite numerous applications to do so. (Except the Nebru plant which was scuttled after being purchased by EG Green)

The remaining abattoirs in WA are all old, suffering from either effluent disposal problems, forced land acquisitions, urban encroachment or processing in-efficiency with most facing all these problems simultaneously.

There is a critical lack of processing space during spring and summer (The time of peak turn off). The issues cited above and the lack of premium export beef competition exacerbates the situation by not providing year round markets. This has and continues to cause acute bottlenecks for farmers trying to sell their livestock and the processors use this situation to exploit farmers through them paying prices equivalent to 1984-5 prices. This is an untenable situation, when today's costs are factored in, In fact the situation facing beef producers now is far worse than the seventies beef crash and yet the industry is being left to flounder.

Unless urgent action is taken the WA beef Industry (which is a major employer and has huge flow on benefits for rural WA) will completely implode. Currently the Western Meat Packers debacle has accelerated the process and billions of \$dollars worth of resources and farm infrastructure are under calamitous threat. The net multiplier benefit to the community the Western Australian beef industry provides should be significant enough to command more attention from the government and the wider community.

The answer to this critical issue is for the Govt to action planning for a Red Meat Precinct without delay. Only Govt can provide the planning, head-works and effect the approvals process and subsequent subdivisional strata titles to allow Industry to get on with investing in a world class development. Time is critical and given that a beef precinct is one of the major Stocktake recommendations any additional delay will further jeopardise the Beef Industry.

RMAG 7/12/2009

