

**SELECT COMMITTEE INTO THE OPERATIONS OF THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS WESTERN AUSTRALIA (INC)**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
MONDAY, 17 AUGUST 2015**

**SESSION TWO**

**Members**

**Hon Rick Mazza (Chair)  
Hon Paul Brown (Deputy Chair)  
Hon Nigel Hallett  
Hon Lynn MacLaren  
Hon Sally Talbot**

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**Hearing commenced at 3.00 pm****Mr IAN RANGLES****Policy Officer, Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA, sworn and examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Welcome, Mr Randles. On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome you to the meeting. Before we begin, I must ask you to take either the oath or the affirmation.

[Witness took the oath.]

**The CHAIR:** You have signed a document entitled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood the document?

**Mr Randles:** I have.

**The CHAIR:** These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of this hearing for the record and please be aware of the microphones and try to talk into them; ensure that you do not cover them with papers or make any noise near them. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today’s proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as the transcript of your public evidence is finalised, it should not be made public. I advise you that publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript of evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr Randles:** No.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Do you want me to kick off?

**The CHAIR:** You can kick off, Hon Paul Brown.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Hi, Mr Randles; how are you?

**Mr Randles:** I am well; thank you.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** I am just interested just initially in your submission on page 1 of what I have got. It is the PGA’s belief that the RSPCA has shifted to a policy position that is inimical to the business interests of your membership. Can you elaborate and expand on that?

**Mr Randles:** That is correct; that is our belief. The reason we formed that opinion is because the RSPCA opposes the export of livestock by ships to overseas markets.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** I suppose, through that, you are highlighting the fact that the RSPCA has not recognised the substantial improvements in the conditions in the live export trade on new vessels and better animal husbandry and certainly the falling mortality rates on board live export ships.

**Mr Randles:** Certainly, there have been great and significant improvements in the export of livestock overseas. Whether the RSPCA recognise them or not, I cannot say; that is for them to choose. However, the evidence would suggest that that is in fact the case, honourable member. What I would say is when I wrote the submission, I googled the RSPCA WA website. That is in my submission. I did it twice, which is probably one time more than most members of the public would

do, and on each occasion it opened with a banner that impugned the live export of animals from Australia to overseas markets—might I say cleverly constructed. It did not actually say that, but if you look at that website, you will see there is a picture of an upside-down cow, which, upside down with its legs in the air, would suggest it is dead. We just find that distasteful and that is why I say we believe it is inimical to the business interests of the members of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. In my submission, I point out how much this industry is worth to WA. But if we look at it at a lower level—how much it is worth to real people, farmers who live on the land, their income and their money—what this says is that they will have to go without an income.

**The CHAIR:** The RSPCA openly opposes live export. What ramifications would that have on your members should they be successful in banning live exports?

**Mr Randles:** I believe there would be a very direct implication on the income of a lot of farms. I have got some figures here which I am sure you guys would have access to. The figures do vary. We can get figures from MLA and the local Department of Agriculture and Food, and they do not always add up. We get them from ABARES and sometimes they are current and sometimes they are a couple of years old. But if we look at the value of sheep live export from WA, it is \$160 million. That is a lot of money. We are in a time of great fiscal rectitude. We are seeing the end of the mining boom. I wonder if we can afford to put a clamp on an agriculture boom that we are possibly seeing the start of now.

**The CHAIR:** There has been a lot of suggestion that we should move to boxed meat rather than live export. What are the impediments to having a boxed meat market?

**Mr Randles:** I guess the impediment is history. People with long memories will recall that there were abattoirs all around this state. There were abattoirs in Wyndham and Broome and Derby, and there are not abattoirs all around this state anymore. Again, there are a couple of different sources. I believe that the Western Australian Meat Industry Authority says there are about 20 licensed abattoirs in WA. I believe Aus-Meat, which is responsible for accrediting those ones for export, says there are 18. I beg the committee's indulgence here because I may have transposed those figures, but I can easily correct that record if necessary. Those abattoirs have shrunk because people prefer or, should I say, our farmers prefer to export their livestock and our markets prefer to have live animals. That is why we do this—because people who buy our animals want them that way. They do not always want boxed meat. There is a complementary trade in boxed meat. I have to be honest and say that the trade in boxed sheep meat is worth more than the trade in live sheep exported, but if you look at cattle, it is the reverse. The value of live cattle exported is substantially larger than the value of boxed beef, so it is not right to say that one trade is better than the other. The RSPCA will tell you that. They will say that there is a lot more sheep meat being sent out in boxes; therefore, there is not a requirement for live sheep. But if we look at cattle, we see it is the reverse. It is a specious argument, because it cannot be used. It is disproved by what happens in the cattle industry.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** I think it also fails to understand the fundamental dynamics of the world meat trade that some communities and some socioeconomic factors or environments have a predilection for live meat, and some markets are set up for that.

**Mr Randles:** I can see I have not answered the honourable member's question properly. What he is alluding to are the cultural differences where some people like to have the control over the slaughter of those animals in their own countries, as is their right. Sometimes this is driven by much more simplistic things like: is there a reliable electricity supply so they can plug a fridge or a freezer in? The reality is: not in all of these countries. Then we need to see how people buy their food. As we know, in our western countries, we buy our food from supermarkets, but it was not always like that. Fifty to 60 to 70 years ago, we did not have that supermarket penetration, and neither do they have that supermarket penetration in many of the markets that we supply live animals to.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** How long have we had a live export trade?

**Mr Randles:** That is an interesting question because people will give you different answers. I guess I can give you a very ballpark answer. The reality is that right since the start of settlement in Western Australia—because if people know their history, we exported horses to India for the Indian cavalry. The point about this is it does not matter what they are for; my understanding is the RSPCA's problem is how they get there.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Let us narrow it down then to live animals for slaughter and food?

**Mr Randles:** As far as I know, it is certainly going back to the 1970s. The honourable member Mr Brown said why. A lot of that early movement to live export, quite frankly, was because of industrial unrest in abattoirs. When farmers had their animals to turn off, they could not because the abattoir would be on strike. It was either what people called a wildcat strike, or sometimes the employees would have been locked out by their employer because they were locked in a very strong industrial dispute. Under those circumstances, farmers are entitled to find other outlets for their animals and they did in fact do that by exporting them live to different markets.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** That is not necessarily the argument that will win over some of us on this committee, Ian, but never mind. My point I wanted to ask you was whether the RSPCA has ever been in favour of the live export trade, because you talk about a shift in policies.

**Mr Randles:** I think you will have to ask the RSPCA. I cannot answer questions for them.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** What is your view, though, because you talk about a shift in policy?

**Mr Randles:** I do not know what their previous views are; I can only talk on what I know to be the case now.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** It may be that it is a consistent policy position.

**Mr Randles:** I do not know. Again, I suggest you ask them to determine what their consistent policies may or may not be. I cannot answer that question.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** As far as you are concerned, is this a recent event that suddenly, something has changed to lead you to say —

**Mr Randles:** I guess I would answer that question by saying that I have worked in my current position for almost five years. The whole time I have worked in that current position, the RSPCA's position has been opposed to live export. I do not know whether you call five years a long time or a current position, but that is the case as I see it. Beyond that I cannot answer your question.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** My question is more to do with what the PGA does regarding animal welfare. Do you have animal welfare policies?

**Mr Randles:** We contribute to animal welfare policies. There is a plethora of animal welfare organisations that engage in animal welfare and we put our bit in when we need to.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do you have a code of practice or recommended guidelines for members?

**Mr Randles:** There is a code of practice on a national basis and we expect our members to subscribe to that. We are not a policing organisation, honourable member. We do not have any jurisdiction over what people can do. That is why there is legislation. We certainly expect our members to abide by the law of the land.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do you have any training for your members in the law of the land regarding animal welfare?

**Mr Randles:** No; we do not have any training. I would serve as a conduit of advice if necessary.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do you have any guidelines for your members, for example, on animal welfare in live exports?

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**Mr Randles:** Certainly. There are a number of guidelines. The obvious one is they have to adhere to the Australian standards for the export of livestock. They are made at the highest level of national government.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Can I ask that you provide those to the committee at some future date?

**Mr Randles:** Sure I can, yes.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Your concern is that the RSPCA has a position on animal welfare that differs from your own position on animal welfare?

**Mr Randles:** Not at all.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** What is the difference between the animal welfare interests of the RSPCA and the animal welfare interests of the PGA?

**Mr Randles:** I do not believe this is a question about differences in animal welfare interests. This is a question of why the RSPCA opposes a lawful export activity—the export of livestock from Western Australia to overseas markets. There is nothing illegal or unlawful about the export of livestock, yet, the RSPCA continually impugns this industry. I have mentioned their website. I know in 2011 that they joined in with Animals Australia to attack the live export industry in that year. They called it co-badging I believe.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do you have any concerns about animal welfare of live exports?

**Mr Randles:** I do not need to have concerns about it, quite frankly; that is not my job. I do not work on a ship; I am not responsible for those animals. I think you should ask those questions of the people on the ships. They are the appropriate people to answer those questions for you.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Are you aware of any animal welfare laws in Western Australia that may apply to live exports?

**Mr Randles:** The Animal Welfare Act, as far as I am understanding, applies up to the low watermark in this state and then after that, animals on ships are subject to an intermeshing number of legislative guidelines, some of them administered by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority under the Navigation Act. Again, I mentioned the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock. There is also a large number of administrative policies that the federal government has in place. There are notices of intention. You have to have a licence to export. You have to submit a consignment risk-management plan. Having done all of that, you have to have permission via an administrative order from the secretary of the Department of Agriculture. It is a well-regulated industry for export. There are a number of hurdles people who may export could fall over because they do not satisfy the requirements of the commonwealth government.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** We have heard today that the enforcement of animal welfare laws in Western Australia are shared between the RSPCA and DAFWA. Do you have the same concerns about DAFWA's enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act?

**Mr Randles:** You say same concerns as to —

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** As they have for the RSPCA.

**Mr Randles:** I do not know what those concerns are about DAFWA. I make no comment on how DAFWA enforces the act, neither do I make any comment on how the RSPCA operates under the act, except to say they are in receipt of half a million dollars of taxpayer money—to a private organisation that does not have to account to any kind of higher body such as this committee for instance or, indeed, Parliament, which is where I would expect public moneys to be accounted for properly in front of our public representatives; in front of our parliamentary representatives, including you all, and you could have an educated debate about the merits of whether that money is being properly spent or not. I do not believe it is, but the question is not for me. That is why I made a submission. The question is for you to answer that.

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**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** The concerns you are raising about the RSPCA campaigning against live exports—you do not have those same concerns about DAFWA?

**Mr Randles:** They are not campaigning about live exports to my knowledge. Are you talking about DAFWA?

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Yes. Are you aware of any approaches by DAFWA or its officers to your members regarding animal welfare of live exports?

**Mr Randles:** Not of live exports, no.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Randles, getting away from live exports for a moment—obviously, we are quite clear on the position of live exports—to other issues that affect your members, say pastoral land, wild dogs, excess numbers of feral horses et cetera, do you find that some of the RSPCA requirements for, say, culling horses et cetera is an impediment to your members?

**Mr Randles:** I would suggest that you are referring to the feral horses at Lake Gregory. We found the RSPCA's position on the Lake Gregory horses to be a difficult one. We believe the long-term prognosis of those horses at Lake Gregory is difficult if they are not culled. We would have hoped the RSPCA would recognise those difficulties too. But that does not appear to be the case.

**The CHAIR:** What about things like animal husbandry? It is my understanding there is a fairly high profile case at the moment regarding disbudding of horns on cattle. If the RSPCA is successful with that, how will that affect your members?

**Mr Randles:** That is a difficult question to answer. I am unaware of the details of that particular case. I should imagine when a decision like that is made, there is always an implication for animal husbandry.

**The CHAIR:** One last question from me is: there is a fairly big push on RSPCA-approved food—RSPCA-approved chicken at this point in time. I know there is a move for RSPCA-approved milk. If there was a move to RSPCA-beef and sheep meat, what effect do you think that might have on members and producers?

[3.20 pm]

**Mr Randles:** It is an interesting question that you raise, Mr Chairman. You mentioned chicken. My understanding is that they have a similar market for pork. I guess the point I would say here is that chicken and pork are intensive industries and they are very highly vertically integrated. So it is actually much easier for them to comply with those requirements. But I do not believe that in our extensive farmlands for beef and sheep there is a requirement for that. That is my honest belief. I do not believe that there is a requirement for the RSPCA to tick off on how the farmers that I represent—broadacre farmers; I should say I am speaking for them today when I say “represent”, I do not believe there is a need for them to do that. Other commentators, not me, have called that “green-washing”—that the RSPCA uses it to extract money out of industries, because, if they do not, they will be subject to the jaundiced eye of the RSPCA. Other people have said that. I cannot say if it is the case or not.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Among your members, are there any intensive operations for beef and sheep meat?

**Mr Randles:** There may be. I would suggest not. I am not intimately familiar with every member's business operation, honourable member. What you are suggesting is a feedlot—I take it you mean a feedlot?

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Any intensive —

**Mr Randles:** There is a separate organisation for feedlotters—the Australian Lot Feeders' Association—and they would be better able to answer your question, I think, and probably by comparing our databases I could answer that question with some certainty.

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**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** So most of your concerns are for cattle and sheep that are on pastoral lands? Is that correct? In other words, is the concern that you have with the RSPCA that they do not want those animals to be marketed as live exports?

**Mr Randles:** Honourable member, I do not understand what you mean by “concern”. How are you using that word? Do you mean concerns as in a business or do you mean am I concerned? I am a bit confused.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** It sounded as though you were pretty concerned in your opening statement about the opposition of the RSPCA to live exports.

**Mr Randles:** Yes. I was quite clear in submission where our difficulties lie. It is to do with live export. I am sorry. I thought you were wanting to know who I represent—who they are.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** No. I am saying does the PGA have any concerns about the RSPCA’s animal welfare policies in any matter other than live exports?

**Mr Randles:** No, we do not, and I think I say that in the submission —

... no wish to cast aspersions on the charitable work that the RSPCA does in caring for animals in need.

I would suggest that says it all.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Mr Randles, what about your opinion as a representative of the PGA? You spoke quite clearly about the horse cull at Lake Gregory. What are your opinions of other feral animal campaigns or opposition from the RSPCA? I mean recently we have seen quite a large campaign on anti-recreational hunting—the RSPCA calls it hobby hunting—that is looking at feral animal control. Obviously feral animals, particularly wild dogs and foxes, and wild cats, have a significant impact on your members, and my constituency—some of my constituency are your members. Do you have any further opinion on how the RSPCA is quite happily advocating for feral animal control of horses from a helicopter and saying that is a humane cull, but with regard to feral animal control by other shooters—shooters licensed by the state government and able to have licensed weapons—to be able to engage in further feral animal control —

**Mr Randles:** Honourable member, anyone could google it, but when the parliamentary report was handed down on recreational hunting, we were asked for our opinion on state reserves. So, it is not open slather. I think that is the point that sometimes the RSPCA does not write the whole story. They truncate it at hunting, and then they combine words like “hobbies” and “hunting” to make it sound bad. Our opinion was we gave tentative support to recreational hunting on public lands, because I read the report, and I formed the view this was something that we could support. I believed it was a trial. They were going to have a trial on a former pastoral lease. As we all know, former pastoral leases have almost no feral animal control. In fact, last year the Department of Parks and Wildlife came to a meeting I attended. They told me their entire budget for feral animal control on their reserves was \$460 000. What that means to my members who have pastoral leases is that those unmanaged former pastoral leases are a constant source and vector of supply into their property. I might add that under the Land Administration Act, they have a legislative duty to control feral animals. That applies to a private landholder, but it does not apply to a public landholder on the other hand. The government asks pastoral leaseholders to do one thing but then ties their hands behind their back because they will not help. Does that answer your question, honourable member?

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Yes; if that is your answer, that is your answer.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** In terms of the comments you have made specifically about the opposition to live exports, you have said that you are not critical of other activities undertaken by the RSPCA. Is that a fair summary of what you have said?

**Mr Randles:** I have not looked at the other activities of the RSPCA, but, having made that comment, I would agree with you, yes.

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**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Given that the RSPCA gets about \$500 000 a year directly from government, what would your response be to the three questions outlined in the terms of reference, specifically with relation to government funding?

**Mr Randles:** I do not believe the RSPCA should get government funding. I do not believe they need government funding. I say in my submission that it accounts for a very small proportion of their funding model. Also, because they are not accountable for that money to a public authority such as yourself, I do not believe that they should be getting public moneys.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** So where do you think the inspectors should find their funding from?

**Mr Randles:** They have a statutory duty under the act. If they choose to carry out their function, then I would imagine they could find that money for themselves. They do not have to do it. There are a number of other agencies that can do it.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Would you expand on that?

**Mr Randles:** I would suggest that the police can be general inspectors, rangers, people from fisheries, the administering authority of the act, and Agriculture WA. They will have to find their money from somewhere as well.

**The CHAIR:** What I am getting from that answer is that you may consider that there is a conflict between animal welfare advocacy and enforcement. Is that what you are saying?

**Mr Randles:** I would suggest that if their position is opposed to the export of live animals, which I gather from going to their website they are, and from things they have done in the past—and that is not the current policy of the Western Australian government to my knowledge—I do not believe they should be getting that \$500 000. I understand it is probably quarantined. I heard another chap give evidence earlier. I understand there is an MOU. That is fine. The trouble is it frees up another \$500 000 within their own structure that they can use to oppose the business interests of the people I represent. I have to tell you I represent the business interests of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. That is my job.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Mr Randles, that is not quite what I asked you. You are talking about the funding there. What I asked you is do you think that the RSPCA, being an animal welfare advocacy agency or charity, has a conflict in promoting animal welfare or advocating for animal welfare and also being the enforcer as far as compliance with the Animal Welfare Act is concerned?

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** A regulator.

**Mr Randles:** I will answer the question yes. It is not something I gave any thought to prior to sitting in front of you, but I do have to answer the question and say yes.

[3.30 pm]

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Do you locate that conflict of interest in DAFWA as well, because they have both functions?

**Mr Randles:** Yes; but in my opinion they are accountable to the government and they are accountable to the people of Western Australia because they have to make an annual report to Parliament.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** The livestock compliance unit, are you familiar with that in DAFWA?

**Mr Randles:** I know there is a livestock compliance unit.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do you think that it is doing its job?

**Mr Randles:** I believe so.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do you think they have enough inspectors there?

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**Mr Randles:** My understanding is they have nine inspectors. Whether that is enough, I could not tell you. It is not for me to judge that aspect.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Mr Randles, following on from Hon Lynn MacLaren, given that DAFWA, who are authorised—certainly the DG is, the authorised person under the act to administer the Animal Welfare Act—and they have the LCU as part of DAFWA, would you contend that the RSPCA probably should be limited to dogs and cats and companion animals, and that the LCU and DAFWA be responsible for livestock and commercial animals, given that that would seem to be the logical fit?

**Mr Randles:** Yes, honourable member. I believe that that is stated on the not quite last page of my submission —

... the RSPCA should confine its activities to companion animals and the welfare of production animals should be the responsibility of national and state agricultural agencies.

We certainly do not suggest that there should not be any oversight of animal production industries—far from it; we just believe that state and national agricultural agencies are better placed to do it. We believe that probably would be a better use of the RSPCA's resources, if they looked after companion animals and left livestock husbandry to national and state agencies. We trust national and state agencies.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Given that your members are businessmen in the agricultural and pastoral industries—I would like to hear your opinion on this—I imagine that they would be quite aggrieved by the fact that there is a duplication of services. One of the things that we as businessmen do not like to see is wastage of public money. Given that the LCU is currently undertaking that role, would your members and yourself feel that there is a need for that duplication and that it can be separated—the roles, as we have talked about with the LCU and companion animals—that could be well managed?

**Mr Randles:** Certainly that is how my members would see it, as you have summarised it.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Have any of your members been prosecuted by the RSPCA for animal cruelty?

**Mr Randles:** I honestly could not tell you. I do not have a role in defending people who have been prosecuted. My understanding is that a lot of these cases would be in a magistrate's court, and it is difficult to track down any kinds of decisions.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do you know whether any of your members have been prosecuted by the livestock compliance unit at DAFWA?

**Mr Randles:** I have been told that anecdotally.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** That they have been?

**Mr Randles:** Anecdotally—anecdotally does not mean anything; someone told you something. I have been told that people have been prosecuted by the livestock compliance unit, yes. Is it correct? I do not know.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** But you have not had the same information about the RSPCA, or you are just not aware?

**Mr Randles:** I am unaware.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** The education—under the terms of the agreement with the \$500 000 from the government to the RSPCA, one of the issues that has been highlighted is the lack of education and the education unit now with the RSPCA. Given that education is probably the best method by which to change the culture of poor animal outcomes, would your organisation welcome the RSPCA reinforcing their education team and perhaps attending agricultural shows, field days?

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**Mr Randles:** We always welcome education.

**Hon PAUL BROWN:** Is there any interaction between yourself and the RSPCA, with education, of your members at the moment?

**Mr Randles:** No.

**The CHAIR:** If there are no further questions, we will close the hearing.

Mr Randles, I thank you for your full and frank answers. In closing, on behalf of the committee, I wish to thank you for your appearance today. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you in writing in the next few days, together with a transcript of evidence, which includes any questions you may have to take on notice. Responses to your questions will be requested by a due date, and should you be unable to meet this deadline, please contact committee staff as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for your assistance today.

**Mr Randles:** Thank you.

**Hearing concluded at 3.35 pm**

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