



**FEEDING THE WORLD: AUSTRALIA, LIVE EXPORT AND THE
INTERPLAY OF INFLUENCES**

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

When advocates consider how to best encourage governments to change policy in their favour, there is an assumed rhetoric that the media are the mitigating factor required to achieve success, without a semblance of a structured argument or indeed evidence behind such a claim. This is in part due to the difficulty that previous research studies have found in coming to a definitive answer as to who and what affects policy change. This research thesis provides evidence to show how policy can be manipulated by not only the media but by an interplay of advocates, the backbench and journalists to influence the policy decision makers.

The focus of this research paper is to answer the fundamental question: who influences federal government policy relevant to the Australian agricultural sector, in particular the live export market, and what are its global implications? Using the case study of the live export industry and events that occurred in 2011 post the *Four Corners* program, "A Bloody Business", this paper deconstructs newspaper articles, parliamentary speeches and the interviews of 17 respondents to reach seven findings that provide practical guidance to inform best practice for those involved in a policy change within government.

This study is primarily qualitative and applies quantitative content analysis methodology to the research sample. This thesis draws on a theoretical framework that includes agenda-setting, Habermas' concept of the public sphere, news as a social construction as discussed by Ericson, Baranek and Chan, together with theories related to gatekeeping, priming, framing, news values and bias. The thesis acknowledges past academic scholarship placing the media at the forefront of policy making, while arguing that policy making is determined by an interplay of political, advocate and news influences.

Thesis certification

This thesis is entirely the work of Fiona Jane Wade except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Dr Caryn Coatney

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Student and supervisor signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

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List of Abbreviations

AFR - Australian Financial Review

ALEC - Australian Live Export Council

AMIEU – Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union

ASEL - Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011

CCA - Cattle Council of Australia

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

ESCAS - Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System

LiveCorp - Australian Livestock Export Corporation

MLA - Meat and Livestock Australia

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MP- Member of Parliament

NFF - National Farmers Federation

NT News - Northern Territory News

OIE - World Organisation for Animal Health

PR – Public Relations

SMH - Sydney Morning Herald

WTO – World Trade Organisation

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Foreword

On the evening of Monday 30 May 2011, I made the conscious decision not to watch *Four Corners*. I had seen the trailers for, “A Bloody Business” and if I am being honest, was rather apathetic towards the subject matter. My attitude changed some two months later when I was appointed communications manager for the Cattle Council and Sheepmeat Council of Australia, and I walked into an industry still reeling from the intense public scrutiny that had occurred months earlier.

Prior to my appointment, I had little exposure to the agricultural industry and identified as a metropolitan consumer of agricultural products. But it was not long before I was struck by the passion shown by all whose lives were intersected by the sector: the farmers, advocates, environmentalists, lobbyists, politicians and the rural press.

By choosing the live export industry as a case study, I was careful not to introduce my own bias into the narrative being developed. My career trajectory and the time I spent in the sector was known to all who were interviewed.

Following my time with “cows and sheep”, I worked as a staffer to a Queensland LNP backbencher followed by Chief of Staff to a Labor politician, giving me an insight into the political, parliamentary and party procedures from both sides of the political fence. After multiple approaches by interest groups asking for a blueprint on how to influence the government decision-making process, I realised there was a lack of accessible information on the best approach for raising individual issues onto the public and political agenda, backed by scholarly research and evaluation.

Now a lobbyist, I undertake a variety of activities to promote an argument in the hope that government will listen and amend policy. This thesis is my attempt to outline best practice by showing that a multiple and multi-layered approach must be considered when undertaking successful policy change, one that combines politics, the media and community advocacy.

Fiona Wade

December 2018

Chapter One:

Introduction

“We like it when the government is in chaos;
gives us a far better chance of getting what we want.”

Mark Burgess, CEO of the Police Federation of Australia

(in conversation, Canberra, 2018).

On 12 March 2018, Canberra’s Chief Minister Andrew Barr declared that he was “over” mainstream media and “hates journalists” (Lawson, 2018). Making his announcement to the assembled media pack he is quoted saying that his government wanted to communicate directly with the people of Canberra, “not through the filter of journalists, and particularly not through the filter of print journalists”. But what exactly is meant by a “filter? How can this claim be reconciled with the role the media have forged as indispensable to modern political systems, in part seen to dominate the political process by holding elected officials accountable, and therefore being at the very cornerstone of what it means to be a western liberal democracy (Norris, 2017; Van Aelst et al, 2017)?

In broad terms, this thesis considers the link between the media and reactive Australian domestic policy. Copious amounts of academic scholarship that have emerged over the past few decades attest to the growing acknowledgement of the importance that the media play in understanding and participating in the political process. But when considering what effect the media have on the process of policy change, often researchers appear to be vacillating between whether the media are purely a channel for policymakers, transmitting multiple policy preferences in the coverage of policy debates (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Dowding, Hindmoor & Martin, 2016; Green-Pedersenn & Walgrave, 2014; Iyengar &

Reeves, 1997), or are the promoter of a particular policy preference (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Weible et al, 2019). This research considers that the answer may lie somewhere in between and demonstrates that other mitigating factors combine with the media to enable reactive policy change to occur.

This professional thesis seeks to consider previous scholarship to arrive at findings that advance professional practice. Using the Australian live export industry as a case study to illustrate and inform the discussion, this thesis rigorously deconstructs evidence to answer the following fundamental question:

What influences federal government policy relevant to the Australian agricultural sector, in particular the live export market, and what are its global implications?

In addition to the above central focus question, this research also addresses a range of sub-questions to provide greater understanding of public affairs, public policy and advocacy practitioners related to the agricultural sector. These include:

1. Who is perceived as having a significant influence on federal policies that relate to the live export of agricultural products?
2. What is the extent of internal and external influences exerted over decision makers in policy formulation in the Australian federal parliament?
3. How, and to what extent, do live export industry organisations and their opponents leverage the media operatives such as journalists to secure governmental support or desired policy change?
4. How did news coverage of the live export industry in 2011 affect Australia's reputation as a supplier of live animals for export?

To address the above questions this thesis focuses on the ban to the live export of cattle to Indonesia that was enacted by federal government following the public airing of the *Four Corners* program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011). The export of live cattle from Australia to Indonesia has been an active industry for over three decades and at 2017 figures is worth A\$1.2 billion (LiveCorp, 2018).

The *Four Corners* program that went to air on the ABC in 2011, initiated by animal welfare and advocacy group Animals Australia supported by the RSPCA,

showed the gruesome slaughter of Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs. Shortly thereafter the trade was suspended by the Gillard government.

Providing a snapshot of Australian politics in a time of internal government instability, following Kevin Rudd's removal from office by Julia Gillard, this thesis examines newspaper articles, transcripts of parliamentary debates and interviews with 17 participants (see Appendix A) to provide data indicating what influenced the government's decision to ban the exportation of live cattle to Indonesia in 2011. Interviewees included three politicians from the Liberal/National coalition; three Labor politicians and one independent; four journalists from the Canberra parliamentary press gallery; two live export industry spokespeople; two parliamentary media advisers as well as a public relations (PR) consultant and an animal activist. The role each interviewee played in the events of 2011 and why they were chosen as respondents will be further discussed in Chapter Three. While some interviewees were happy to be named, six members of the research sample requested anonymity for professional reasons and therefore, it was decided to assure confidentiality to all participants, aiding consistency and promoting honest responses. This study's analysis of interviews, newspaper articles and transcripts sourced from parliament's Hansard combine to paint a picture of the political landscape during 2011, revealing numerous various players involved in the case study and their influence on policy changes that occurred.

By drawing on classic journalism theories including agenda-setting (McCombs, 2014, 2018; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Protess & McCombs, 2016; Vargo, Guo & Amazeen, 2018), the public sphere (Calhoun, 2015; Habermas, 1989; Papacharissi, 2019)) and news as a social construction (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987; Sissons, 2016), this thesis finds that there are multiple advocates who influence the live export policy narrative at differing junctions (Lippmann, 1922; McCombs, 2018; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The advocates include the animal activists who are anti- live export, the industry who is pro live export, journalists who are acting as advocates as well as the backbench in federal parliament. Within the trajectory of the narrative it becomes evident that in the first instance, the advocacy of the animal activists and the anti-live export campaigners succeeded in pressuring the federal government to change the animal live export policy.

However, as the narrative progresses, the pro-live export industry proceeded to advocate and influence another change of policy in their favour. This study argues that the actions of the animal activists and the industry needed the media and a favourable political climate including an active backbench, for policy change to occur; and that the media did not enable change without external influences.

There can be no argument that there is divisiveness within the live export debate, with supporters of the trade citing the industry's role as a generator of income, jobs and protein source for export; while detractors maintain the trade takes jobs from Australian meat processors, is barbaric and cruel to animals. The case study considered in this thesis involves a rare convergence of forces including advocates, politics and the media. This thesis asserts that the news media's representation of what happened to the live export industry in 2011 damaged Australia's reputation and capacity as an active and reliable source of beef exports and illustrated the fragility of the supply chain, thereby demonstrating the wide-ranging effects of domestic political decisions on export markets. It could be argued that in a world becoming evermore globalised with increased international linkages, it is no surprise that domestic policy makers find their policies have wider ramifications (Krugman, Bosworth & Cooper, 1999). In general, the agenda of the policy makers is to benefit their countries' economies and trade is one of the most obvious. But when the commodity traded is one that provides sustenance and protein to a developing country as in the case of the live export of cattle to Indonesia, an abrupt halt to the trade can have far-reaching consequences. These effects include detrimental economic outcomes for the industry, a straining of the diplomatic relations between Australia and Indonesia and highlighting the dependency of Australia's trade policy upon domestic politics, as this study will attest.

Feeding the world

Assuring food security is linked to broader global economic and social stability. As the title of this study intimates, Australia plays a pivotal role in responding to global food demands, with agricultural and food industries important to the Australian

economy as well as forming part of the nation's identity. The challenge of providing adequate nutrition on a global scale is daunting, with a reported one in eight people suffering from hunger (Strange, 2014, p. 755). A recent example of how the food supply chain can affect the social fabric of a nation was seen in 2007/08 when the global food price crisis led to significant social unrest in several developing countries (Galtier, 2011; Gilbert & Morgan, 2010). For Australia, regional stability is an important policy objective; therefore, playing a role as a major food trading nation has strategic importance, which is demonstrated by exporting some 70 per cent of the food the country produces (Prasad & Langridge, 2012) mostly to the Indo-Pacific region.

Beef is high in protein and the provision of beef (either boxed or live) is a trade that Australian producers have invested in for decades. Demand for protein is on the rise across developing nations due to several factors. These include global population growth, projected to be 9.5 billion by 2050 (United Nations, 2015) as well as socio-economic changes such as rising incomes and increased urbanisation also playing a role. Consumption of red meat has risen by almost 60 per cent between 1990 and 2009 across the Indo - Pacific region (Hanchion, McCarthy, Resconi & Troy, 2014).

The live export of animals for slaughter makes a substantial contribution to the Australian economy. Figures from the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council (ALEC) indicate that in 2017, the total live export trade was worth \$2 billion to Australia of which beef cattle totalled \$1.35 billion, with exports to Indonesia making up 60 per cent. As a supplier of agricultural goods, Australia's role goes much further than as a beef exporter, "contributing to the diets of 60 million people, mostly in the neighbouring areas of Asia and mostly via beef, wheat and dairy products" (Prasad & Langridge, 2012, p. 2).

It is important to note that although acknowledging Australia's part in the fight against food insecurity, this thesis is focused on the news media's representation of live export debates that indicate the reactive nature of live export policy making and its perceived vulnerability to special interest groups. While the findings of this study show that any threat to Australia's ability to be a reliable

source of food has the potential for reputational harm,¹ this study argues that the news coverage of an interruption to the trade of live cattle to Indonesia not only exposed the fragility of the live export industry but made other industries question their security to operate. There are reports that industry groups questioned Australia's commitment as a signatory to the international trade law regime under the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994* ('GATT')², set up by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It is in this context that the implications for Australia's international trade obligations, by restricting live exports, are a central concern in the formulation of Australia's policy.

Government and live export.

Even the most sceptical members of the pro-live export camp would have to concede that exporting livestock for slaughter poses significant hazards to animal welfare. This is due to the stress to the animals caused by loading large grazing animals onto ships, the long voyages, different climates and unregulated handling and slaughter practices in other countries that do not have the monitoring practices or animal welfare laws of Australia. For these reasons, over the past decade the live export trade has been subject to numerous government and parliamentary reviews sparked by animal welfare incidents, all of which have resulted in regulatory reforms.

Governed by a complex mix of federal legislative regimes under the *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997* (AMLI Act) and the *Export Control Act 1982* (EC Act), legislative responsibility for live animal trade sits within the

¹ Wade, F. (Interviewer), Coalition politician A (Interviewee) (2016, December 08); Wade, F. (Interviewer), Coalition politician B (Interviewee) (2016, December 17); Wade, F. (Interviewer), Industry spokesperson B (Interviewee) (2016, December 13); Wade, F. (Interviewer), Journalist A (Interviewee) (2016, February 16); Wade, F. (Interviewer), Labor politician B (Interviewee) (2015, February 11).

² Wade, F. (Interviewer), Coalition politician C (Interviewee) (2016, February 15); Wade, F. (Interviewer), Industry spokesperson A (Interviewee) (2016, March 28).

portfolio of the federal Minister for Agriculture. In addition to the two aforementioned laws, the *Navigation Act 1912* and state-based animal welfare legislation also play a role in the regulation of the trade. All exporting companies are required to be licenced and these licences are regulated by the federal department. Within the federal legislation, the secretary of the department has the mandate to issue orders such as the *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry (Standards) Order 2005*, which requires that licence holders comply with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* (ASEL). These standards set out the requirement of the live export process and cover the animals until they arrive at the purchasing country. ASEL also imposes reporting obligations on the exporters, and it is this self-regulation that the industry has tried hard to protect. It is very apparent within the reading of the legislation that the federal government has no jurisdiction over the handling and slaughter practices that occur once the live animals arrive at their overseas destination. All countries are very protective over their sovereign rights and it became evident within the research of this thesis that Australia's politicians were mindful of the implications that could be drawn if there was a perception that Australia was dictating what occurs on foreign soil.³ The animal activists were clearly cognisant of the limitations of the legislation as well and therefore identified the only opportunity available to them to change the trading policy was at the point of export which takes place on Australian soil and where Australian government legislation can be enacted.

This research argues that a reactive change occurs when an issue that is of importance to the advocate is raised on the public agenda. According to Quiggin: "Interest groups, and political factors have played an increasingly important role in ... the factors determining relative and absolute economic growth in Australia and other countries" (1987, p. 1). While risk and uncertainty are pervasive features of life in general, it appears that risk is higher in agriculture where, "farmers deal with ... public policies that may either mitigate or exacerbate the risks they face" (Quiggin & Anderson, 2016, p.1).

³ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Labor politician B.

As this thesis will show, this practice-based research narrative of lived experience through an unprecedented phenomenon provides an original contribution to professional practice. By exposing the news media's representation of the industry in 2011, using live export as a case study, this thesis makes an original contribution to practice-led learning.

The future of live export.

Comments made by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard following 2011 indicates that she is unrepentant over decisions made by her government in 2011 affecting the live export industry. Speaking at Canberra's National Press Club in 2013, Gillard clearly indicated that she considered the ban of live cattle exports as a necessary move by government, made so that the industry cleaned up its practices and the lucrative business model could continue. She said that had a ban not been put in place: "the Australian people would have effectively withdrawn the social licence of the [live export] industry and campaigns would have started in a way that meant it could not be a continuing industry in our nation" (Gillard, 2013). To some extent, time has proven her to be correct with more destinations opening access to Australian animals for export, including the lucrative Chinese market, following the events of 2011. This market expansion occurred with no discernible public outcry from animal welfare activists.⁴

However, questions over the longevity of the trade remain, due to the continual concerns over animal welfare practices. While the 2011 ban of cattle exports to Indonesia initiated increased oversight by government with the introduction of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS), there continue to be breaches of animal welfare standards that anger the animal welfare activists and who continue to pressure government to change the live export policy. News of these breaches are often accompanied by footage supplied by anti-live export advocates and is reported on by the media (Appendix D) but not to the extent seen in 2011. Continued animal welfare breaches have fuelled an

⁴ Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B.

expectation expressed by industry and politicians,⁵ that future changes to the trade seem inevitable. This presumption is supported by an announcement made by Labor's Opposition spokesman on agriculture Joel Fitzgibbon who, following the death of 2500 sheep in transit to the Middle East in 2017, publicly stated that live export was not viable, and Labor would work towards ending the trade (Worthington, 2018). While a Nielsen poll commissioned by the World Society for the Protection of Animals found that 67 per cent of Australians were more likely to vote for a party or candidate who promised to ban all live sheep and cattle exports (Neals, 2013), Labor ran on a commitment to phasing out live sheep exports at the 2019 federal election, while indicating tacit support for the continued trade of live cattle for export, with Fitzgibbon quoted in the media as saying, "It became clear based on the science that the live sheep trade is not able to continue while also meeting reasonable science-based animal welfare expectations" (Zillman, 2019)

The politician on the backbench is in a unique position to influence the decisions of government. This was made evident when several conservative backbenchers openly supported an anti-live export policy following the death of the sheep in 2017. Their support was made evident by the tabling of a Private Members Bill on 21 May 2018. The *Live Sheep Long Haul Export Prohibition Bill (2018)*, introduced by former Liberal Minister, NSW rural backbencher Sussan Ley, and co-signed by Victorian Liberal Sarah Henderson, was a break away from coalition policy on live export. Aimed at initiating restrictions on the exportation of sheep and lambs during the northern summer, the Bill was a break away from coalition policy on live export. In her reading of the bill, Ley said:

Australians will no longer accept rural export industries with animal welfare practices that are inferior to those our farmers willingly comply with every day.

Nor will they understand the logic of putting our clean green sheep meat industry at risk for a sector that is one-tenth the size, in decline and actually competes with our domestic production.

⁵ Industry spokesperson A; Labor politician B.

Parliamentarians are certainly noting high levels of community outrage (2018).

Ley made the point that “much of the live export chain lies outside Australia's legal jurisdiction in international waters and overseas countries” (2018).

Henderson said in her speech to parliament in support of the *Live Sheep Long Haul Export Prohibition Bill 2018*:

It is significant that we both [Ley and Henderson], as Liberal members of parliament representing large regional electorates including many farmers and agribusinesses, have taken this stand. Overwhelmingly, the people of Corangamite are saying, “Enough is enough”. After decades of noncompliance, after decades of inhumane treatment of sheep, after decades of tolerating a trade which continues to tarnish our international reputation, Australians are saying, “Enough is enough” (Henderson, 2018).

It should also be noted that several other coalition Members of Parliament (MP) made public comment in favour of the bill (Bettles, 2018; Worthington, 2018; Simmons, 2018). Yet, when given the opportunity to put the above rhetoric into action, politics appears to have driven the voting patterns of the MPs to such an extent that the two authors of the bill, Ley and Henderson, voted against changes to the live export legislation, despite their previous public remonstrations. A political sceptic may suggest that their timely promotion to the outer ministry by newly appointed Prime Minister Scott Morrison stopped a potentially embarrassing outcome for the embattled Coalition government, given that promotion into the ministry means that ministers (junior or not) are beholden to vote with the government. This situation showed how backbencher manoeuvring can contribute to unexpected policy changes which will be further discussed in this thesis.

It is of interest to note that Australia is not the only exporting country that is currently wrestling with the dilemma of trade versus animal welfare within the political arena. In the United Kingdom (UK), reports suggest that the Conservative government of Theresa May have “backtracked on a key post-Brexit suggestion to ban the export of live animals for slaughter, angering politicians and animal rights campaigners” (Embury-Dennis, 2018). The Environment Secretary Michael Gove said he was “minded to restrict them [the trade]” after previously launching a

consultation into a ban earlier in 2018 that raised hope among anti-live export campaigners that the live export of animals would cease. According to UK Greens MP Caroline Lucas, “Brexiters promised a ban on live animal exports ... Now Michael Gove says it won’t happen” (Embury-Dennis, 2018).

The driving force behind policy change.

According to Quiggin:

Governments at both state and federal levels are forced to make concessions to certain interest groups ... because they [the interest groups] have it in their power to promote or frustrate the achievement of the government’s objectives (1987, p. 2).

If the above statement is true, it is little wonder that advocating on behalf of interest groups has become a multimillion-dollar industry with countless movements’ worldwide attracting likeminded supporters who speak as one voice in order to influence decision makers to change policy in their favour. Animal welfare attracts an army of supporters across the globe with numerous international and national organisations such as Animals Australia, the Royal Society of the Protection of Animals (RSPCA), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Animal Welfare Association established to advocate on behalf of animals. The news media representation of animal welfare relevant to the live export market forms the basis of this case study. Stopping live export of animals is high on the agenda of animal welfare activists in Australia who consider it barbaric and inhumane and who believe a change in the policy that allows for this trade to continue is required.

Central to this research is policy, a term often used but rarely defined clearly. According to the Caledon Institute of Public Policy, world citizens literally eat, drink and breathe public policy:

Public policy determines the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink. It affects taxes, transport, housing, education and infrastructure. It affects the food we eat – how it is harvested, where it is distributed and sold, and how much we pay ... It influences virtually every aspect of our lives (Torjman, 2005, p. 1).

While policy itself is a broad concept, the premise lies in the desire to achieve an outcome considered to be in the best interest of all members of the society. The optimist would assume that government's construction of public policy would be the result of balanced, deliberate and considered decisions involving the identification and analysis of stakeholder views together with legislative requirements balanced with national interest. As was said by Coalition politician A: "A good government has good policy."⁶

This study shows how the formulation of public policy is intricately linked to political objectives. But it is important to remember that this study considers the development of reactive policy, emerging in response to a crisis and appealing to a specific audience, in stark contrast to proactive policy development that is achieved through deliberate choice as determined by the governing political elite with broad public appeal. Nevertheless, the similarities in the development of the two policy approaches outweigh the differences, with the involvement of stakeholders, advocates and the community at large. Paul Burstein says:

... most social scientists who study public opinion and public policy in democratic countries agree that (1) public opinion influences public policy; (2) the more salient an issue to the public, the stronger the relationship is likely to be; and (3) the relationship is threatened by the power of interest organisations, political parties, and economic elites (2003, p. 29).

While this may be true, questions arise as to how public opinion is informed. In the interest of this thesis, it is judicious to consider not only to what extent public opinion informs public policy but what other factors influence public policy, thus investigating an interplay of influences. The power and influence of factors such as the media, community and advocates in Australian political decision-making cannot be ignored. Therefore, this study will articulate the way these operate within the political decision-making environment.

⁶ Coalition politician A.

The media, policy and interplay of influence.

Habermas' (1989) theory of the public sphere is often raised in communication and media studies as an idealistic view of the media whereby it acts as a platform from which the public can hear all views on an issue. Policy makers are known to consider the media as a shortcut to public opinion because they – rightly or wrongly – assume that the public (and therefore voters) are heavily influenced by what they read in the papers or see on television (Burstein, 2003; Ericson, Wright & McIver, 1993; Page & Shapiro, 1992). Further studies claim that the media influences the actions of politicians and decision makers in certain circumstances (Hoge, 1994; Robinson, 2001, 2002). But to date, studies illustrating a direct and concrete link between the media and policy outcomes have been generalised (Soroka, 2003; Neuner, Soroka & Wlezien, 2019.). This has meant that, while there is considerable evidence of an indirect link between media coverage and policy outcomes, there has been limited research on what caused the numerous reactive policy changes that occurred to live export in 2011. It is identifying the precise nature of the relationship between the media and the policy process that lies at the heart of this thesis.

A conversation about the intentions of the media and journalists' involvement in the policy process cannot begin without reference to agenda-setting theory (McCombs, 2018; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Vargo, Guo & Amazeen, 2018) and positioning this theory as a backdrop to discussions. However, from a theoretical framework perspective, when considering the media's active involvement in policy change, it is appropriate to consider agenda-setting as a circular process (Berger, 2017; McQuail & Windahl, 1993, p. 20). Theorists Dearing and Rogers (1996), Baumgartner and Jones (1993) Trumbo (1995), Sevenans (2017) and Zahariadis (2016) argue for the adoption of a circular model of agenda-setting process, which includes the relationship between the media and the public as pivotal to policy making.

The ability to influence policy agenda can be considered as one of the most important sources of political power by politicians and advocates. Throughout the scholarship there exists an acknowledgment of the power the media yields and

influential role it plays. But understanding and documenting the extent of that influence and the wider ramifications has been somewhat less easy to measure. Attempts by researchers to demonstrate the influence of a single news story on public opinion or impacts of news reporting on a government policy decision have proven elusive on live export (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2012). Therefore, by using the live export ban in 2011, a rare case study is provided which allows for an academic deconstruction of factors that influenced policy decisions.

There is little doubt that the term “media” has entered the common vernacular, just like the term “news”. But in the interests of definitions for this study, the media includes commercial newspaper outlets that disseminate information to the public, while “news” is a less concrete definition and a more intuitive and broader concept. According to Alain de Botton (2014) the news:

... knows enough to render its own mechanics almost invisible and therefore hard to question ... and fails to disclose that it does not merely *report* on the world but is instead constantly at work crafting a new planet in our minds in line with its own highly distinctive priorities (p. 11).

The relationship as exposed by de Botton between the news and agenda will be investigated within this thesis and will form an essential signpost indicating who influences policy change at the federal government level.

Outline of the study.

This chapter has serviced to broadly outline the research question while setting the parameters for further discussion. The literature review, provided in Chapter Two, considers the pre-existing literature and places it in the context of the research question, and discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. Chapter Two illustrates the influence that the media play on policy and agenda-setting and the importance of the media in a democracy as documented within the academic discourse to date. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology and theoretical framework employed within this study and considers these within the parameters of a transformative paradigm that has a focus on social justice while providing a voice for the marginalised.

Chapter Four places the research in context by examining the live export industry in 2011. The chapter reflects upon the controversial history of the trade and looks at previous interventions by advocates, the media and politicians. This chapter studies the role of the *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011), and the activity surrounding the filming and airing of the program. The players and their interconnected relationships that affect the live export crisis of 2011 are also identified. Chapters Five, Six and Seven examine the large body of evidence collected and deliberated upon for this thesis. This includes 805 newspaper articles from 14 different mastheads, interviews with 17 research participants as well as 83 speeches from Parliament. Following the trajectory of events, the information collected is broken down into themes that emerged through the deconstruction of the evidence. Chapter Five focuses on the media coverage during the first week of June 2011, while Chapter Six focuses on post 8 June 2011 and Chapter Seven considers evidence from July 2011. The findings elicited from these chapters provide the basis of the narrative that is the focus of this study and which shows that, although animal welfare was initially the predominant theme in the public agenda, its dominance was brief as financial implications surfaced and dominated the narrative, indicating greater media inclinations towards these concerns. Chapter Eight uses the transcripts of political debates as recorded in Hansard as evidence of the influence that political debate can yield when advocating an issue.

Chapter Nine outlines the findings that provide a holistic approach for those who wish to advocate for change within the federal arena. Since this case study occurred at a time when political, advocacy and media forces converged, this thesis offers useful information for industry practitioners by illustrating the interplay of influences that occurred. As a practice-based research narrative, reflections upon unprecedented phenomena by using the lived experience provides original insights for professional practice. These findings include considering the timing of when to launch a campaign, the use of imagery, knowing the politics, understanding the relationship between the press gallery and the politicians, persuading journalists as advocates and involving the backbench as agitators while understanding the risk of negative media coverage to a brand. While the events of 2011 occurred in a political

climate that Australia may never again experience, this study has been able to use these unprecedented events to highlight the many activities that worked in unison to achieve successive policy shifts. At its conclusion, this thesis discusses the significance of the findings and the importance they hold for the disciplines of journalism, public relations and advocacy, thus proposing a blueprint for considering the factors that influence a government to change policy.

Value of the study

The findings within this thesis are not to be considered as only relevant to the live export industry. Instead, the aim of this Professional Doctorate is to provide evidence-based research to develop professional practice for those who seek to engage in the Australian political environment by becoming involved in advocating for policy change.

It is of note to recall that the Professional Doctorate is primarily concerned with development of professional practice, as identified in this thesis, with its contribution to the development of practice in advocating to government by using the live export industry as a case study. The primary focus of this thesis is the interrelation among the various stakeholders that coexist and how they converge to forge policy change. It is proposed by the study, that the insights gained from outlining the theoretical concepts together with content indicating how events were portrayed in the media, while relating to the 'lived' experience of media professionals, will contribute original knowledge to professional practice. Such accounts from which to draw, specifically as related to live exports, do not exist and as such this thesis informs those who currently practise in this domain. Therefore, by its very nature and by deconstructing newspaper articles from 14 major mastheads, interviewing 17 respondents and perusing 83 parliamentary speeches, this Professional Doctorate will enhance and develop the practice of engagement with government. Fundamental to this doctorate is a level of study that identifies the tactics used in a successful advocacy campaign, using the events that occurred to the live export industry in 2011 as an illustration of how to achieve policy change and the consequences for government, stakeholders, industry and the media.

Chapter summary.

This chapter serves as an introduction to the research question and the subject matter that this thesis will consider. The chapter introduces the events that occurred to the live export industry following the *Four Corners* program as the case study and outlines the complexity of the dilemma that surrounds the issue. While acknowledging Australia's position as a provider of protein in the global fight against hunger, this chapter points to the impact that domestic policy decisions have on trading partners, the federal government's legislative role and places the broad themes of policy, agenda-setting and the interplay of influence in the live export context. The following chapter will consider prior academic literature and place the research into context alongside the rare phenomena that this thesis will deconstruct.

Chapter Two:

Literature review

In deconstructing what influences federal government policy in relation to the live export of cattle to Indonesia in 2011, there is a need to consider previous academic scholarship with relevance to the research question. By using the high-profile case of live export, propelled into a place of dominance on Australia's national political and public agenda following the airing of the *Four Corners* program "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011), and by employing research methods and theoretical concepts to unravel the events that occurred following the program, this study shows who can set public agenda, how these agenda are maneuvered and how governments move reactively to satisfy varying interest groups. This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework of this thesis that includes agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, Zahariadis, 2016), news as a social construction as discussed by Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987) and Habermas' concept of the public sphere. The chapter will also consider journalism theories including priming (Errington, 2015; Sonnet, Johnson & Dolan, 2015), gatekeeping (Lewin, 1947; Erzikov, 2018), news values (Cagle & Bednarek, 2015), framing (Goffman, 1974, Geise, 2017; Moy, Tewksbury & Rinke, 2016), and bias (Lichter, 2017). which are especially pertinent to the outcomes of this research. These theoretical perspectives and their application to the research question are considered within this chapter in conjunction with specific interactions between the politicians, the media and the public.

The study of public policy occurs primarily because of a desire to understand why certain decisions are made. But it is relevant to this inquiry to understand that most policy decisions are multi-layered and the reasons multi-faceted. This leads to the belief that the decision-making environment is one where there is a need for all decision makers to negotiate, bargain and accept compromise (Cairney, 2012, 2015). Therefore, it could be suggested that policy often only changes when several

events happen at the same time (Cairney, 2012) or when there is found to be a problem that needs to be fixed. Communication, defined as the process in which a reality is produced (Carey, 1997), becomes an important power resource in policymaking.

To say that the term policy is a very general term is supported by scholarship (Adams, Colebatch & Walker, 2015; Colebatch, 1998; Dye, 1966; Howlett, 2019), but one common thread within the academic discourse is that policy is a product of our governing system. According to Cairney (2012), it is identifying which problems exist, and deciding which ones need the attention of government, that is squarely placed in the centre of the policy making process. This links back to the central research question of this paper that asks who influences federal government policy decisions. Therefore, in the light of this discussion, agenda-setting is thus an important and, one could argue, necessary ingredient to consider when investigating who influences the policy process.

The media and their ability to decide whether to cover a certain political issue (Habermas, 2006) have the possibility to control public perception of any debate, suggesting a tremendous degree of power over the policymaking agenda. Discovering who holds the power will answer the question of whether power can be used to “set the agenda” and encourage policy change in some areas at the expense of others. But the idea of power is far from simplistic. Errington (2015) states that the, “nature of the media’s power remains elusive in spite of thousands of studies across a range of academic disciplines.” (p.68), while Freedman (2014) contends that media power is a concept that is often taken for granted. This research adopts Castells's definition of power as referring to:

... the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actor's will, interests and values (Castells, 2009, p. 10).

It further draws on Turow's argument that power involves, “the use of resources by one organization to gain compliance by another organization” (Turow,1992, p. 24) and his emphasis on the interconnections between the “power roles” embedded within the communications process and those of society as a whole.

According to van Dijk (1988) power is based on a privileged access to valued social resources such as wealth or public discourse, which means that dominant groups may influence others and one way to achieve such dominance is through their access to media. This view, therefore, suggests that the producers of media discourse exercise power as, "... they have sole producing rights and can therefore determine what is included and excluded, how events are represented" (Fairclough, 1989, p.26). To van Dijk, media power is generally, "symbolic and persuasive, in the sense that the media primarily have the potential to control to some extent the minds of readers or viewers, but not directly their actions" (1988, p. 11). How does this account for the media's involvement in policy shift, when he states that "mind control by the media can never be complete" due to the media's lack of "access to sanctions?" The suggestion that the media need other ingredients to enable action to occur aligns with the findings of this thesis.

Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting is considered the cornerstone of modern political communication, and its consideration within this thesis is of paramount importance to the outcomes of the research. However, the role of the media in a democracy to inform the public depends on many conditions (Fortunato & Martin, 2016; McCombs, 2018). Conventional models of agenda setting hold that mainstream media influence the public agenda by leading audience attention, and perceived importance, to certain issues. The ample academic literature on agenda-setting theory has been dominated by a deconstruction of the lines of communication, with many observers arguing that agenda-setting is the media's main contribution to the political process (McCombs, 2014). Wein (2018) suggests that the, "amount of literature on agenda setting is quite voluminous and comprises more than 400 studies published since 1972" (p.151). The theory of news agenda-setting suggests that the media drives public concerns and tells the people not "what to think" but "what to think about" (Entman, 1989, p.347). McCombs and Shaw (1972) argue that the public agenda should be considered as a mirror of the media's priorities of subjects. This gives the media heavy influence on public opinion and, consequently, political influence. However, increased selectivity and audience fragmentation due

to online media threaten the traditional agenda-setting power of the media (Feezell, 2018).

This idea can be traced back to Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) and his notion that the media's influence is exhibited by their ability in controlling the "gap" that exists between the event and individual, with the media filling the gap with information of their choosing. In their seminal Chapel Hill study McCombs and Shaw (1972) empirically tested Lippmann's hypothesis that versions of the world presented by the news media are a primary source of citizens' perceptions of public affairs. This considered the relationship between the patterns of news coverage for public issues and the voters' perception of what were the most important issues of the day. They theorised that the media's agenda set the public agenda, and by undertaking a detailed content analysis over 25 days of the 1968 US presidential election together with a survey of voters, found parallels in the top five issues covered by the media and those of importance to the voter (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). While this study formed the basis of agenda-setting tradition within communication research and expanding upon Lippmann (1922), subsequent influence of agenda-setting of the news on the public has been dominate in many future studies (Hill, 1985; Geiß, 2019; McCombs, Danielian & Wanta, 1995; Rhidenour, Barrett & Blackburn, 2019; Takeshita, 1993, 2006; Weaver, 2007). The basic agenda-setting role of the news media is to act as a filter, focusing public attention on a small number of key issues to the exclusion of many other issues that may be competing for attention. McCombs and Shaw's 1972 study empirically showed that overall, the public accepted what the media have chosen for them to focus upon. This occurs due to the restricted number of topics that can be covered in the news.

That the mass media are omnipresent and central to policy making has been argued by Linsky (1986). Linsky argues there is a crucial role for the mass media and the use of the media by politicians has a direct correlation to the implementation and adoption rate of policies. According to early researcher McLuhan (1967):

All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social

consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered (p.26).

In short, the early research found that policy makers proactively use the media to further their own policy goals and that the media have a larger impact on the process of policy making – such as timing and the extent of consultation – than the actual content of policy.

But perhaps it is not just the media that is responsible for driving agenda and instead, the media needs assistance to gain the attention of decision makers. Philo and Happer (2013) suggest that the media play a facilitating role in the, “easing through of policy action by repetition and reinforcement of media messages ... especially where these are linked to other types of structural support” (p.333). Scholarship on the social construction of news is now noting that the ability for politicians to set the news agenda appears to be weakening due to the emergence of the third age of political communication (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999) where online activity and social movements are muddying the waters. As society becomes evermore media rich and media dependent, journalists are taking a more prominent role in framing news and taking on roles as political commentators (Willis, 2010) and organised groups are emerging through online networks. But no matter whether the journalist is acting as observer or commentator, there is an apparent commonality of thought in the scholarship that the strategic focus of contemporary political journalism means that the media choose whether they promote or support serious discussion, giving preference to conflict over debate (Harcup, 2016; Phillips, 2010, 2015).

The news media can be thus considered an “agency for social control and the journalists the agents” (Ericson, Baranek & Chen, 1987, p.357) using their “power of imprinting reality in the public culture to police what is done in the microcultures of bureaucratic life” (p.356). Therefore, it is no surprise that the news comprises of stories about policy failures and governmental errors. The news discourse is then made up of differences, power struggles, and conflict. As said by Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987), “Procedural deviance prompts discourse, and it is this discourse of deviance that is the essence of news” (p.356). But it is to be

recalled that the journalist sets out to have a social control effect, and that it does not happen surreptitiously.

Hartley (1996) argues that objectivity within the media is exaggerated, and that all discourses are politically and ideologically aligned and news making embedded within all life experiences. Schudson (1978) suggested that there could be no absolute objectivity in the production of news and journalism, linking journalistic outcomes with broader trends in socio-economic, political and cultural life. Dearing and Rogers (1996), in their study of the agenda-setting process and AIDS, broadened the approaches used by McCombs and Shaw (1972), while Cobb and Elder (1971) defined agenda in political terms as being a set of controversies that fall within the legitimate concerns that then merit the attention of the polity. In their discussion on agenda, Cobb and Elder (1971) place emphasis on the conflict that can erupt when there is a divergence of views by two or more groups. This multiple nature of an issue is important to consider and provides an understanding as to why and how an issue emerges on the public agenda. The degree to which this is true is not always obvious in some circumstances, although it could be said that all issues that are given an agenda-setting treatment by the media have more than one side to the argument, as argued in this study.

The current media landscape, with multiple channels for information, is a vastly expanded media landscape in comparison to that of the sixties and seventies. Studies undertaken by Coleman and McCombs (2007) suggest that agenda-setting effects result from pervasive diffusion of news by many sources of the media rather than from one particular form, whether traditional or electronic.

While Singer (2018) notes that the “popularity of the agenda-setting concept has hardly abated in the digital age” (p.218), there is an acceptance that researchers are now challenging the initial concepts of agenda-setting given the movement and public interactivity with online media. Singer (2018) identifies the difference between traditional media and online news as newspapers being, “a self-contained and unchangeable product, and tomorrow’s news will be a wholly new (self-contained and unchangeable product)” (p.216) whereas “online messages are eminently fluid constructions: continually changing, perpetually expandable, always open to connection of combination with something - anything - else” (p.217).

This thesis considers public agenda-setting as a political process in which the mass media play a crucial role in enabling social problems to become acknowledged as public issues (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Hansen & Machin, 2018; Kowalewski & McCombs, 2019). By considering agenda-setting to be an “ongoing competition amongst issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public and policy elites” (Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 22), this view will provide a sound basis upon which this thesis will build. Cobb and Elder (1981) supports the understanding that an issue has multiple aspects, involves conflict, and as such serves to remind practitioners and researchers of the media that agenda-setting is inherently a political process, so do Van Aelst & Walgrave (2016) and Fawzi (2018).

Perhaps it is judicious for the voting public to consider that policy makers are expected to consume themselves with issues that represent the direst of social problems. This would include the careful analysis of a problem, application of various interventions, evaluation and reauthorisation. While it may make for considered policy, the policy-making process in its purest form does not make for good news - it is too slow. Journalism values newness above all else (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017) and is thus biased towards events and steers away from drawn-out issues (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), which can be considered as a major impetus for the media’s less than constant influence on the policy agenda (Kingdon, 2011).

Previous scholarship does not highlight the comparative attention given by the media, the public and the policy makers to some issues and not to others in relation to live export (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Fischer, 2003) and therefore misses the need to include important factors such as what it takes for live export to attract the attention of the media and public. One of the failings of agenda-setting theory is it does not acknowledge personal experiences and potentially ethics and values as a credible source of information, especially when the topic is one of welfare and rights. Therefore, this thesis suggests that explanations of the “issue-attention” must include both mediated and direct experiences, with the media alerting the audience to current realities, prevailing circumstances and events. Previous studies have also focused more on the media-public connection than with the influences of policy. However, this study addresses this shortfall and considers the insinuation that the agenda-setting process is essentially a competition by proponents of

advocates, vying for the attention of media professionals, the public and the policy elites.

Setting the agenda: priming

According to Hart and Middleton (2014), the media priming theory (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, Kinder, Peters & Krosnick, 1984), “fundamentally reshaped scholars’ understanding of the political power wielded by the media” (p.581). It is suggested within this thesis that the public agenda is volatile, and that issues surge and decline in rapid succession as focal points of public attention and concern. Several related theoretical approaches, all of which have been subjected to extensive academic rigour, suggest that changes in the public agenda are caused by changes in the media agenda. Priming, “a concept highlighting how communicative cues can activate associations” (Sonnet, Johnson & Dolan, 2015) differentiates itself from framing by “whether we think about an issue ... [to] how we think about it.” (p. 328-9). The priming hypothesis presumes that audiences are most likely to form opinions and political judgements based on information most recently received. According to Domke, Shah and Wackman (1988), the media acts to prime the audience by focusing public attention on certain topics which then provide the main basis for evaluation of the effectiveness of political leaders. Considering the reliance that the public have on the media for their political information, it can then be determined that the media agenda will impact what information the public will use to make political judgements. As said by Krosnick and Kinder (1990):

the more attention the media pay to a particular domain – the more the public is primed with it – the more citizens will incorporate what they know about that domain into their overall judgement of the [president] (p.497).

As an important concept in media effects, priming offers an explanation as to how the information from the media influences decision making. By referring to the “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63) priming is used when news content suggests to audiences that certain issues are benchmarks for evaluation of political performance (Errington, 2015).

The theory implies that the media have the capacity, via issue coverage, to shift the public's support and view on an issue and illustrates the media's significant role in politics. The importance of priming to the deconstruction of the theories that underpin this thesis, is in considering the way that the news media shifted their focus from the animal welfare narrative to that of fiscal concerns and the effect that the industry ban had on the farming community.

Within this theoretical approach, there is an assumption that attitudes are based on those that have been brought to the fore, and indeed the most salient, and the media can shape what is considered when making judgments about political issues. The importance of this lies in the implication that the media needs other conduits to assist in the process of moulding policy decisions. It is this argument that forms a central focus of this research study. Interestingly, in a previous qualitative study, Bermejo (2007) demonstrated that public opinion becomes more important to policy makers when media coverage is high, and this research further investigates this premise. Overall, a common theme across the literature is that the relationship between the media and the audience is intrinsically complicated and that the media are not just acting as a channel of information. Instead, it is becoming more and more apparent that information changes in several ways before it offers a "specific view of social reality to the audience" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 258). There is a distinct undercurrent of manipulation which leads to the question of who the manipulator is and who is being manipulated. It is prudent to recall that not only have the times changed, considering new technologies, but so too has the audience. In an ever-increasing policy literate electorate, policy also matters. Take, for example, the constant debate on tax reform that is now shaped not only by what the treasurer says, but also involves the work of experts in the universities, think tanks and industry associations. Information they disseminate reaches the broadest of audiences through the work of journalists who understand and communicate through news articles, opinion pieces and editorials.

As previously mentioned in this study, there is tacit understanding that newspapers and television can generate impressive levels of short-term popular response. Gamson suggests that while: "general-audience media are only one

forum for social discourse ... they are the central one for social movements” (1995, p. 94). But when discussing measuring the impact of agenda-setting in the political arena, Gamson states that, “we need a specific behavioural theory for political actors and we cannot simply rely on the simple public agenda-setting model” (1995, p. 85). Davis (2007, p. 99) writes that “with a couple of notable exceptions, much of the mediated politics work remains speculative when it comes to making assessments of how politicians and agendas are actually influenced.” He and others argue that increased media attention alone is unlikely to result in pushing an issue near the top of the parliamentary agenda (Edwards & Wood, 1999; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). It is, therefore, fitting that this case study shows how the media can be used to manoeuvre the politicians into a position where they change policy, and how this is done in conjunction with advocacy and the media.

Media persuasion about live export is an under-researched area in Australian academia. Nevertheless, Young (2004, 2007) observes the role of political advertising on election campaigns, and her scholarship on political persuading in relation to the general tenor of this study can be applied. Most notably *Government Communication in Australia* (2007), edited by Young, is a useful insight into the ways in which citizens, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and governments communicate in a mediated world. She states that “studies of political communication ... often focus on elections and the campaigns that proceed than rather than what governments actually do in office” (p. xxiii). She goes on to question whether the media are used to reinforce its own political views or challenge it but notes that due to the limited research done in the area, there is a generalist view that people like to read news that agrees with what they are already thinking.

It is no secret that the art of persuasion has become a business which includes - but is not limited to - advertising and public relations firms, lobbying groups, pollsters and speech writers. This is supported by a variety of scholarly dicta (Anderssen, 1971; O’Keefe, 1990; Smith, 1982) with Perloff (2003) defining political persuasion as a: “symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviours regarding an issue through the

transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice” (Perloff, 2003, p. 17). Perloff (2003) suggests that journalists are not trying to change people’s attitudes towards a topic but instead aim to describe events to provide people with information for the audience to make up their own mind, making free choice an integral ingredient in the decision-making process. This, in part, goes some way to show the differentiation between the investigative journalist and the journalist who has become an advocate.

This thesis asserts that more members of the public were persuaded to respond to the 2011 *Four Corners* program “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) than any other social issue at that time. The media’s role of persuasion is highly visible in the case study used in this thesis, offering a clear illustration as to the ability of the media in persuading government to both ban and later reinstate the live export trade. This study contributes to our understanding of the various methods that underpin the activities used to persuade people to change or modify their opinions on an issue.

Gatekeeping

As a starting point, there is an overwhelming agreement throughout scholarship as to the importance of informed political journalism in a democracy. Indeed, there are ample historical papers and abundant research on journalism that has traditionally mythologised the role of journalism as a “fourth estate”. This term emerged from within the British establishment where the media were considered a checking mechanism against the Monarchy, the House of Lords and the House of Commons (Hampton, 2010). The media acted as a “watchdog” on behalf of the public by holding the powerful to account for their actions (Cole & Harcup, 2010). Indeed, for democracy to flourish, access to a variety of sources of information, sources without bias is vital for an open and fair discussion. The journalist considered as “watchdog” can be traced back to the 1700s and the foundation of democracy in England and America. As mentioned in Louw, John Stuart Mill, argued in 1859 that the flow of information via a free press was essential to avoid corruption (Louw, 2005, pp. 37-38), and was reflected in America’s Bill of Rights.

It could be argued that the co-existing journalism theory of gatekeeping is an extension of the role of the media as “watchdog” with gatekeepers ultimately crafting what information is being released to the mass public and thus determining the public’s social reality (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Media gatekeeping has been well studied. As a theory, gatekeeping allows for the journalist to extract parts of the news which they then publish or present to the public (Grosheck & Tandoc, 2016) or as Shoemaker and Vos suggest, by employing a, “... process by which countless occurrences and ideas are reduced to the few messages we are offered in our news media” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 75). Vos (2015) goes further to consider the gatekeeping role of the journalist to be defined as “a fluid process where personal factors and the context interplay in a negotiation of responsibilities that is re-enacted every day” (p.22). This research highlights that the gatekeeping theory needs to consider wider ranges of external pressures and internal characteristics of the individual gatekeepers or journalists, in deciding what does or does not become news, and thus could allude to the loss of journalistic ideals such as objectivity.

Qualified evidence that overt media campaigns result in a shift in public attitudes on live export is scant. This study looks at political, industry and advocacy that, when combined with the media, can generate impressive levels of short-term popular response. This study fills gaps in the literature by showing how these factors shaped live export policy in 2011.

Public sphere

Within this study there is a requirement to decipher not only the role that the media play in deciding public policy, but also the emergence of mass media technologies that are able to communicate with the masses and therefore facilitate the building of mass democracies (Louw, 2005 p. 50). This allows scope for a discussion on the manner of the relationship between democracy and the media. Habermas (1989) introduces the notion of the public sphere which is intimately linked to democracy and political participation. The public sphere is seen as “a domain of our social life where ... public opinion can be formed” (1989, p. 132)

where the political function of the public sphere lies primarily in “its ability to challenge, determine or inflect the course of state policy” (McKee, 2004, p. 191). The media play a central role in this process, as it is “only in the mass media that vast populations of people can come together to exchange ideas” (2004, p. 5). In fact, it could be argued that Habermas (1989) found the technologies of mass communication to have extended the power of the media’s ability to determine what the public knows about public issues and that the public sphere has become a space for the construction of public opinion by the media. It is, therefore, no coincidence that arguments about the media and the public sphere often run along similar tracks. As McKee notes, “academics worry about trivialisation, spectacle and fragmentation of ‘the public sphere’, while popular commentators say the same things about ‘the media’” (2004, p. 5).

Political theorist Derrida (1994) is harsh in his judgement that the juncture between the mass media and traditional politics renders politicians as mere shadows of themselves, emptied of any meaning, and structurally incompetent. He says:

Media power accuses, produces and amplifies *at the same time* this incompetence of traditional politicians: on the one hand, it takes away the legitimate power they held in the former political space (party, parliament, and so forth), but, on the other hand, it obliges them to become mere silhouettes, if not marionettes, on the stage of televisual rhetoric. They were thought to be actors of politics, they now often risk, as everyone knows, being no more than TV actors (1994, p. 80).

The theoretical foundations of this thesis stem from the fundamental concept that the mass media have become the vehicle for political engagement and conduit of political messages with a certain level of control over the messaging. An easy way to demonstrate how political parties subscribe to the same assumption is by considering the large media campaigns undertaken at election time, large both in scale and in funds. By using a case study of live export, this thesis can clearly identify that the media have the power to influence the agenda priorities and can shape ethical decision-making, apropos how societal problems are solved.

Today, there are many more ways by which the public can access information, and scholarship has noted a shift in the way the public sphere participates with the media and interacts with politics, mainly attributed to the rapid spread of the Internet, the World Wide Web and social media. Suddenly, contact with the media have expanded at an enormous rate consequently challenging the traditional definition and role of the journalist. Huijser and Little (2008) claim that overall, studies on Internet use, consistently suggest growing participation and development of an alternative public sphere, apparently driven by disillusionment with mainstream media. A more policy savvy audience rejects views of a trivial public sphere (Hartley, 1996, 2017; Jacobson, 2017; Schafer, 2016). By delving further into the topic and subject matter for this study, it becomes quite evident that the major distinction between politics and the mass media boils down to the requirement of the media to focus public attention on a limited range of topics or themes. Because of these limits, the media will always pick and choose what they will feature and how they will present it thus feeding into “issue-based” democratic practice (Baker, 2002).

While Habermas’ (1989) original idea of a communicative space was contrived prior to the age of digital communication, the concept remains a valuable tool for analysis. In essence the public sphere has expanded with journalists joined by content generating public citizens. But while the digitalisation of the public sphere means its expansion, journalists are still acting as advocate for and representative of the community (Newman, Levy & Nielson, 2015).

News values

In understanding how the media exert influence on an audience, it is appropriate within the scope of research for this thesis, to consider social cognition theories that considers a limited concept of salience, such as found in Higgins (1996). He refers to salience as “something about a stimulus event that draws attention selectively to a particular aspect of the event” (p.135). This specifically excludes internal factors that influence selective attention and makes the salience of events especially important to consider in connection with the role of the media in political persuasion, and as such, if salience is solely an “attribute of the stimulus, it would

appear largely determined by whatever party fashions that stimulus” (p.138). Therefore, how the media organise, and present news stories affect the salience or newsworthiness of certain types of information, which in turn renders different constructs within the psychology of the individual. This is extremely pertinent when considering the influence, the media have on the Australian public in relation to live export of animals, particularly in 2011. But it is the journalistic concept of news values that determines the salience or newsworthiness of the story (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Hall, 1973; Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, 2017; Schudson, 2001; Tiffen, 1989).

News value is a well-established predictor of media coverage. Deciding what qualifies and defining the term “news” is not easy. Brighton and Foy (2007) mention that journalists themselves find it difficult to define what the term “news” means. Even the seminal work found within Galtung and Ruge’s landmark study (1965) provides an incomplete explanation as to what makes the news. This notion will be emphasised later in the thesis by the illustration that a negative event is more likely to become a news item (p. 69), and how the “actions of the elite are ... more consequential than the activities of others,” (p. 68) relating to the interest levels journalists have in politicians and their activities. McQuail (2010, p. 5) made the assertion that news was a selective, solidly manufactured product, with journalists and editors acting as “gatekeepers” and deciding what is news and how it should be dispersed; meanwhile Schultz (2007, p. 196) argues that six news values dominate selection: timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict, sensation and exclusivity.

As suggested by Harcup and O’Neill (2017), not one theory of news values can explain how the media choose what they report because “arbitrary factors including luck, convenience and serendipity can come into play” (p. 1472); while external factors, including the role of public relations professionals (Brighton & Foy, 2007) and the belief systems of the journalist (Donsbach, 2004; Phillips, 2015), must also play a part in determining what story is pursued. The sceptic may say that in fact, news values are not a reflection of what information the public needs to know but, “more a reflection of organisational, sociological and cultural norms combined with economic factors” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, p. 1473).

This research will contribute to prior study on news values to suggest that bias and news value interact, as the example used in this thesis illustrates. The news

value of the *Four Corners* program produced by Sarah Ferguson (Ferguson, 2011) is very much determined by the type of program that was produced and the level of autonomy enjoyed by Ferguson and her team. But it is crucial to recall, that news values change between mediums. This is illustrated within television journalism in which “visuals dominate” the story selection process (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, 2017; Tiffen, 1989). Gladstone (2011) refers to this as “visual bias” (p. 65) in broadcasting, where stories with strong pictures will be promoted over stories that might be important but are visually dull. It can be surmised that the graphic visuals which dominated the *Four Corners* program ‘A Bloody Business’ (Ferguson, 2011) assisted with the story selection.

Framing

Framing theory joins agenda-setting as being considered the cornerstones of modern political communication. Developing a clear conceptual grasp of framing acts as a unifying thread in political communication research and in the context of media research, most often refers to the analysis of journalism. As suggested by Entman (1993) and Iyengar (2005), the media repackages certain aspects of a story in such a way that it influences the broader context within which the stories are understood.

The theory of framing first appeared in Goffman’s seminal work of 1974 which postulated that the context of messages affects audiences’ subsequent thoughts and actions about those messages. He considers “frames” enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify and label” the world around them (p.10). While synthesis of a broad breadth of research literature shows some variations in definition, Walter Lippmann (1922) wrote, “... of any public event that has wide effects we see at best only a phase and an aspect.” He added: “the facts we see depend on where we are placed, and the habits of our eyes” (pp. 53-54). Such a statement supports this research paper’s reflection on framing; this is achieved by the inclusion or exclusion of images, opinions or examples, and should be considered as the theoretical structure that guides the process of shaping the information into a news story (Gitlin, 1980). The media, therefore, select and highlight facets of events and issues, and by linking them, engineer a story and promote a point of view. Adjunct to this, Nimmo and Combs (1983, 1992) suggest

that reality is created through communications, which can be interpreted as meaning that there is not one reality, but many. This social construction example of reality considers the use of language as a determinate; the importance of which will be illustrated in the deconstruction of the research material for this paper where it becomes evident that the framing of the argument is tightly bound with language use.

As a theoretical approach, framing suggests that the presentation of news events in mass media can systematically affect how those who access the news come to understand events reflected (Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997). Previous academic writing has suggested that framing occurs not only to heighten certain aspects of events or individuals (Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 2005) but also when reporting on legislation, introducing the “why” rather than the “what” into the story (Patterson, 1993). Entman suggests that, “...frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements which might lead audiences to have different reactions” (p.55). In extension to this, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) theorise that framing provides potential to ignore some matters while calling attention to others, linking framing to the suggestion that the media are “priming” the public as reflected on page 25 of this thesis. Entman (2010) progresses this theory further by suggesting that framing is the central process by which government and journalists exercise political influence over each other and the public (p. 417). Indeed, it could be said that to be successful as a political communicator, the framing of the story and events appearing in the public domain should be seen to promote and benefit the value systems of only one side of the argument to the detriment of the other.

There is no doubt that words used in news articles considered in this research assist in the framing of the tone and indicate the side taken in the argument over the live export industry. News organisations use different words phrases and images, including those produced using metaphors, to define and construct different events, all of which can be very clearly demonstrated within this thesis. Words used to frame can be distinguished from phrases used to set context and have a capacity to enact a reaction and stimulate a response. This is supported by Snow and Benford (1988) who suggest in their research that the frames with the greatest potential to influence the reader are words that are emotionally charged. It

is therefore paramount that the use of framing informs part of the methodology for this research paper, discussed in Chapter Three, and will go to provide further evidence of the media's influence over the dissemination of the message to the public.

But as this research will show, the media also uses visual framing to convey messaging. Visual framing is both contingent and distinct from framing that occurs in print news (Fahmy, 2010) and can help determine the interpretation of an event (Entman, 1993). According to Zhang and Hellmuller (2017), "visual framing is capable of helping the news media reduce the complexity of social realities and frame the deviant and remote events" (p.488). But it is clear that visuals are not neutral (Hulteng, 1979; Tagg, 1988; Thomson, 2019; Zhang & Hellmuller, 2017) and visual journalists' selective use of news images can determine how a news event is framed and influence the public's perception of the issue (Coleman & Banning, 2006).

Hertog and McLeod (2001) contend that frames derive power from symbolic significance by their use of myths and metaphors in the narrative. Images, therefore, can be considered powerful framing tools because they are less intrusive than words and require less cognitive interpretation. This is supported by Bell (2001) who argues that photographs in particular are closer to reality and can create stronger emotional and immediate responses. Bell's arguments, however, do not allow for the possibility that the context of the visual can be manipulated and thus change the narrative portrayed.

Power of the image

This study contests that the use of gruesome visual images was paramount to the public's response to the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) and to subsequent events. Despite images being an integral part of media coverage, there are few studies that apply news value theory to photojournalism of live export news; significant works on the news values of photojournalism include the writings of Singletary and Lamb (1984) and more recently Harcup and O'Neill (2001, 2017). While Druckman (2003) asks the question "has the rise of television caused citizens to focus more on the images than issues?" this thesis considers this within the

Australian context of the politics of policy and will add to the scholarship indicating that the strength of the visual imagery exerts an influence on the emotional response to the processing of the news story as suggested by foremost by Lilleker (2014) and then Capel and Bednarik (2015), who suggest that strong visuals can be a reason for a journalist selecting to pursue a story. Rogers and Thorson (2000) suggest that the high attraction value to the image that those seen on a page, website, or screen often give the first impression of a story, and they are readily remembered as is evident within the narrative of this thesis. It becomes evident that visuals are good framing devices because, according to Wischmann (1987), they are “capable of not only obscuring issues but [also] of overwhelming facts” (p. 70).

Ellis (2000) writes that the “twentieth century has been a century of witness,” where there has been a shift in the way we perceive the world existing beyond our immediate experience (Ellis, 2000, p. 9). He says that: “During this century, industrial society has embarked upon a course that provides us as its citizens with more and more information about events that have no direct bearing upon our own lives yet have an emotional effect upon us simply by the fact of their representation and our consequent witness of them” (Ellis, 2000, p. 80). Ellis raises the issue that news imagery, as seen by a television audience is worked over “as a necessary consequence of its position as witness by attempting to define what it is that is being shown to the audience ... creates narratives, talk overs, makes intelligent, tries to marginalise, harnesses speculation” (Ellis, 2000, p. 79). This observation by Ellis aligns with the findings of this research which goes to question the impartiality of the footage both at the initial spot where the vision was captured as well as with the production of a packaged program. This aside, there can be no denying Ellis’ presumption that the visual evidence obtained via cameras has brought the audience face-to-face with events thus making it impossible to claim indifference, as was seen with the live export crisis in 2011. But an important question to consider is: whether the person who manipulates footage for the purposes of working it into a narrative or packaged program is as objective as the person who is filming the footage and therefore witnessing events first-hand?

According to Epstein (1973), Gans (1979) and Bennett (2016) events that can be covered by visual footage are far more “newsworthy” than others. Schwalbe and Dougherty (2015) contest that people process visuals more quickly than words due to the ability of the visual to elicit an immediate spontaneous emotional response. Television uses moving image to compete with other forms of the media in what has become a very competitive and overcrowded marketplace. Smoller (1990) believes that television makes the reporting of complicated stories that focus on complex issues more simplistic, with little scope for the story to be portrayed in other than black and white and good and evil terms. Smoller also points to the bias that can exist with the news media’s need for pictures.

The focus on stories that are amenable to visual portrayal can mean that some important stories and policy angles are ignored, while the need for interesting pictures reinforces journalism’s penchant for the unusual. Former US White House Press Secretary Rex Granum, as quoted in Perloff, supports this assertion: “when things aren’t going well ... the evening news’ portrayal is worse than in fact the reality is ... there is a tendency of extremes because television is so dependent on pictures” (Perloff, 2003, p. 88). Jukes (2013) argues that communication driven by image is emotionally charged and can be superficial when compared to an analytical newspaper story. He further states that television packages (such as that delivered by *Four Corners*) have the power to deceive by using distorted camera angles, skilful editing, suggestive commentary, false file footage, manipulative interview grabs and even emotive background music; the influence of images will be further discussed in Chapter Nine. Meanwhile Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987) ask: “How can reality be represented ... and the essential truth conveyed without distortion, using the techniques of fiction and drama as in the theatre?” (1987, p. 335). This approach will be useful when examining the images in the *Four Corners* program “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) and the potential that existed for manipulation of the visuals to ensure that the images coincided with the narrative that the animal welfare advocates wanted the public to see and hear, so that policy change occurred.

Objectivity versus bias

Claims of bias come from the assumption that the media should be unbiased and objective particularly in their treatment of politics and public issues. Objectivity has become a core value (Donsbach & Klett, 1993) for the media. Journalists establish their professional integrity by distinguishing themselves from the particular manipulation of information involved in propaganda and public relations (Kaplan, 2009) and for some the term bias is: “synonymous with agendas, lies and authoritarian attempts to deny audiences the freedom to make up their own minds” (de Botton, 2014, p. 29). It becomes apparent during the perusal of previous academic studies that both academics and practitioners prescribe to the statement that it is impossible to produce journalism with no bias at all. The argument suggests that the very act of producing news involves the selection of information and opinions which may be influenced by bureaucratic, organisational, cultural, economic and political factors. As stated by McNair: “News is never a mere recording or reporting of the world ‘out there’ but a synthetic, value-laden account which carries within it the dominant assumptions and ideas of the society within which it is produced” (McNair, 2009, p. 39). Indeed McNair (2017), in identifying the five roles of journalists within the public sphere (p.159), considers that journalists have a right to take sides in political debates and to be partisan. This is due to the participatory role that journalistic organisations have in the democratic process and thus accepting that journalists are themselves political actors with the power to shape public opinion.

Allan (2010) states that while journalists may claim to tell the truth, that: “begs a rather awkward question: namely, whose definition of what is true is being upheld as “the truth” (p. 71). It is therefore realistic to assume that journalists’ routines and practices are likely to privilege some sources of information over others. Perhaps impartiality is an unattainable ideal. Perhaps it is, as suggested by de Botton (2014), unrealistic to escape bias and instead there is a need to consider bias in terms of providing an explanation of what events mean and introduce, “a scale of values by which to judge ideas and events” (de Botton, 2014, p. 29). At the individual level, researchers have debated professional self-perceptions of journalists and the influence of their political views on the news (Elliott, 1988; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, 1996). International research into the journalists’ role in

news gathering has been prolific but without conclusive results as to a consistent professional role. Slawski and Bowman (1976) found that most journalists were pluralistic in their outlooks. The seminal works of Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1996) have furthered the research upon the journalist's role perception, as has Cassidy (2005) with findings comparing the interpretive/investigative role conception to that of the adversarial journalist who seeks to mobilise opinion. Interestingly Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) found that journalists who saw their role as interpretative/investigative felt it important to investigate government claims, analyse and interpret problems and discuss public policy, while the adversarial was sceptical of both government and business interests.

Such observations might suggest that openly biased reporting is more honest than that which claims to tell the truth but may nevertheless be skewed. Journalism indeed: "might benefit from a sense of its own subjectivity" (Charles & Stewart, 2011, p. 27). Factors to consider include the need to sustain public trust in journalism, but also to engage the audience. Transparency may be aided by openness about reporters' personal views. Opinionated reporting, such as that seen in many British tabloids, may be misjudged to be more honest, or attractive. It could therefore be argued that while complete impartiality may be an unattainable ideal, disclosure can be seen to provide some guarantee of accuracy and fairness. But the question so often asked is how far does media bias translate into real media power and influence? Evidence of such influence can be more easily measured when looking at campaign results but is harder to pinpoint in public policy making, which is what this thesis will illustrate by showing the various ways the media exhibits bias during the live export crisis of 2011. There is evidence, supported by the scholarship of Groseclose and Milyo (2005), Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) and Ardevol-Abreu and Zuniga (2016), which indicates bias is shown not just in editorials and comment columns, but the way in which news is selected and interpreted within news articles. This adds to the plausibility of the argument that the press helps to determine the political agenda and influences public opinion on specific issues.

The ABC, as the government-funded public broadcaster, has comprehensive coverage over the country. Claims of bias against the ABC are not new, but perhaps significantly, both the Labor and Coalition have been far less hostile to the ABC

when in opposition (Jolly, 2013). This thesis investigates the claims of bias against the media and considers if the live export story was portrayed with impartiality, with presentation of all the facts and perspectives. This thesis will discuss in Chapter Nine whether *Four Corners* “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) was aligned with the editorial standards of the ABC, especially standard 4.2 which states that the public broadcaster must “present a diversity of perspectives so that, over time, no significant strand or thought or belief within the community is knowingly excluded or disproportionately represented” (ABC, 2011b) in Chapter Nine.

While there is academic consensus that intense media attention on issues can shift political agendas and policy developments, there is criticism that this is not due to the simple stimulus-response model of agenda-setting commonly employed in studies (Cairney, 2012) but there are other factors at play. This thesis will further consider the process of news, described by Tiffen as “generat[ing] patterns of [journalistic] responsiveness which political leaders [and political actors in general] can exploit” (1989, p. 74), while examining the role of the ABC journalist involved in the development of the story. John Pilger (2005) quotes noted American journalist T.D Allman as saying:

... genuinely objective journalism is journalism that not only gets the facts right, it gets the meaning of events right. It is compelling not only today but stands the test of time ... journalism that ten, twenty, fifty years after the fact still holds up a true and intelligent mirror to events (2005, p. 17).

This idea of journalists blurring the line of objectivity was raised by Janowitz (1975) who suggested that:

The gatekeeper can be considered as the ideal of the enlightenment of the mass public; the advocate, as the ideal of the lawyer and almost that of the politician (p. 626).

Such a comment indicates a concern over undermining of the objectiveness of journalistic practice due to the journalist taking on the role of advocacy, with debate among journalism practitioners about the appropriate role of advocacy in journalism (McNair, 2009) and the interconnection between advocacy and gatekeeping. Advocacy journalism will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Reference to investigative journalism as a long form piece that begins with straightforward, routine journalistic inquiry and raises more questions as the narrative unwinds precedes the emergence of advocacy journalism. De Burgh (1999) believes that audiences have become familiar with the way investigative journalism demands attention; and the way it fed public discourse and sustained the public sphere. Protesse et al (1991) referred to the form as “journalism of outrage”.

Ettema and Glasser (2007) consider investigative journalism as, “...journalism at its most politically vigorous and methodologically rigorous. Sometimes, however, it is journalism at its most vulnerable” (p.491). The structure of investigative pieces means that they are identified as having lengthy narratives with a careful, argued exposition of a considerable weight of evidence, the majority of which was previously hidden, secret or difficult to find; a strong, continuous reference to the moral questions raised; a strong evocation of empathy with the victims and of outrage and condemnation of the guilty. The potential for vulnerability, as stated by Ettema and Glasser (2007) exists if the journalist claims that the investigative piece is balanced yet delivers it in a way that is perceived as being biased. According to Dennis and Rivers (2017, p.8), this “old journalism was blind to an important part of the truth... [having] built in bias. The burden on proof was always on the minorities”. Protesse et al (1991) goes further saying:

They [investigative journalists] seek to improve the system by pointing out its shortcomings rather than advocating its overthrow. By spotlighting specific abuses of particular policies or programs, the investigative reporter provides policy makers with the opportunity to take corrective actions without changing the distribution of power (p. 11).

This form of journalism has traditionally been at the pinnacle of the journalist career climb. In Australia, the ABC’s flagship program *Four Corners* built its reputation on providing the platform for investigative pieces to camera that would otherwise have no forum in the free to air media. But there exists a difference between a piece of investigative reporting and partisan witch -hunting according to Feldstein (2009).

Christians et al (2009) consider that the journalist has four roles: one of monitoring, one facilitatory, a radical role that seeks social change and a collaborative role that helps government achieve its aims, and that these can be interchangeable. But if the journalist takes on the radical role, it is evident that to achieve social change an immediate loss of objectivity has to occur and then according to Careless (2000, p.6), it becomes advocacy journalism in which it “openly speaks for or pleads on behalf of another, giving the other a face and a voice.” The idea of journalists working as custodians of public conscience indicates a merging of the terms investigative and advocacy journalism. There is, however, a clear differentiation: investigative journalism leaves the public to make their own opinion, advocacy journalism not giving the public the choice.

According to Charles (2013), alternative models of journalism have emerged to counter the:

news values associated with the so-called mainstream media – news values- which are increasingly criticised for serving only the interests of the political and economic elite (p. 384).

Such an alternative model is that of the advocate journalist who challenges the power structures of society and plays a radical role (Christians et al, 2009).

Advocacy journalists write with an obvious commitment to particular points of view, one which promotes a specific political or social cause, and act as a critical voice in their own right challenging authority and supporting change. The journalist becomes a “motivator for action” (Charles, 2013 p. 388). Advocacy journalism moves past mainstream confines of journalism to reach an audience with a particular message, or according to Maras (2013, p.2), “Objectivity is about presenting what is, but advocacy is about changing what will be.”

But is clear that advocacy journalism is not only found among the extremities of the media but is threaded through the conventional, and given today's complex news ecologies, defined by a diverse range of sources of news, advocacy journalism has evolved beyond partisanship and simply taking sides. The oppositional portrayal of advocacy and objectivity is perhaps a false dichotomy. The issue is not whether advocacy is present in journalism, but the extent and shape of its presence (Charles, 2013).

Earlier researchers Cohen and Westlake (1988) are somewhat scathing when considering the advocacy journalist's impact on policy, saying that they write on important policy issues in which, "... they have no specialised university training only superficial prior knowledge ... and preconceived ideas and positions". They also claim that advocacy journalists demonstrate a failure to comply with "established patterns of proof and argumentation when they prepare their advocacy briefs" (p. 16). And yet, as claimed by Haynes, Hughes and Reidlinger (2017) and Hall (2015), the policy-making process undertaken by government does not always occur in a linear fashion and can often deviate from expert opinion and can be influenced by advocacy.

Donsbach and Patterson's (1996) study found that a journalists' political beliefs can impact on their news decisions. As they go about their work, a reporter's:

partisan predispositions affect the choices they make, from the stories they select to the headlines they write ... it flows from the way they are predisposed to see the political world (p.466).

Meanwhile earlier research by Starck and Soloski (1977), indicated that journalists who saw their role as involving high participation in the presentation of an issue tended to produce stories that were less impartial than reporters who saw their role as involving low participation. Although different, conflicts of interest can also result in expressions of bias in a journalist's reporting, which according to Borden and Pritchard (2001) occurs when a reporter's judgment and performance is influenced by personal interests outside of their primary obligation to provide the public with reliable information on which it makes decisions and include loyalties to an organisation or cause (p.74).

While the emphasis in a news broadcast is solely on providing information and not on provoking action, for advocacy journalists, information alone is not enough to inspire change and fulfil the role they believe journalism should be playing in society. Traditionally, the division between journalism and activism has been motivated by a fear of being perceived as biased. This social responsibility model of journalism, which has objectivity and impartiality at its core, is arguably too restrictive and serves only to maintain the interests of the consumer and not

those of the community (Allan, 1997, p. 319). But it is important to do more than assume advocacy journalism is just about taking sides; rather advocacy journalism is a proactive approach that does not just report facts as they are but engages with the news to seek a pre-determined agenda.

It is important to note that the impetus between mainstream and advocacy journalism is not just about one taking sides versus the other being impartial. The pivotal point concerns the composition of news and how it should be reported. For advocacy journalists, it is no longer enough to report the news as mere facts. Advocacy journalists must find a story, engage in the story and deliver a story in such a way that an audience will want to act. To achieve this, advocacy journalists must embark upon radically different forms of storytelling. The documentary provides a perfect vehicle for this type of reporting. Instead of merely acting as neutral witnesses to events, advocacy journalists get involved in the story that they are producing. They are increasingly working with campaigns – or with campaigning ends at least – to diversify the voices the audience hears, the people the audience meets and the images the audience sees to procure real social change. The scholarship placing the journalist as advocate is not prevalent but Hanitzsch (2007), Kempf (2007), Schultz (2007) and the earlier work of Janowitz (1975) place the journalist as advocate within the discourse.

It is suggested that there still exists an ideal that the mainstream media focuses on the model of objectivity, which stresses factual reporting over commentary, the balancing of opposing viewpoints, and maintaining a neutral observer role for the journalist (Schudson, 2001). However, research undertaken for this study argues that journalists have been crossing those boundaries and participating in commentary and opinion in comparison to objective journalism. According to Bowd (2017):

ownership, community expectation and changing journalism practice are just some of the factors with the potential to influence the role of newspapers (p. 87).

Andrew Bolt, Michelle Grattan, Phillip Adams, Miranda Devine, all journalists, appear in print media expressing their views and opinions, in contrast to reporting the facts; and each is politically aligned. But there are claims that now, more than

ever before, their personal opinions have become more obvious. Paterson and Roskam (2012), writing for the Institute of Public Affairs, observe that obvious prejudices evident in opinion pieces by journalists turned commentators make it impossible to rely on the media to hold governments to account. They say: “The personal prejudices of journalists are revealed in any number of ways, but particularly by their decisions on what to write about and what not to write about” (p. 8).

As previously suggested within this thesis, Kaplan (2009) believes that investigative journalists hold to the notion of objectivity. This is in part to set illuminate the difference between journalism and public relations professionals whose job is to manipulate information for a particular purpose and outcome. The relationship between the two is necessary and according to scholars, a vast amount of the content in the news media are the result of interactions between journalists and public relations practitioners (Davies, 2008; Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1989; Macnamara, 2012). Claims that the rise of the public relations industry has come at the expense of traditional objective journalism can be supported within the literature (Burton, 2007; Davies, 2008; Moloney, 2006; Sissons, 2012) and there is a predilection to consider advocacy journalism an action of the public relations professional rather than the journalist. This research argues that advocacy journalism is distinctly different from the genre of public relations, while not denying that parallels exist due to both the advocate journalist and the public relations professional having a clear agenda. But that is where the similarity ends. While the role of public relations professionals is to manage and enhance the reputation of the organisation they represent (Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2004; Theaker, 2001) “with the aim of influencing opinion and behaviour” (Oliver, 2007, p. 9), high-quality advocacy journalism makes clear its position from the outset and is open in its attempts to search for possible answers, changes and solutions. A high standard of advocacy journalism builds on a critical self-awareness that is constantly held to scrutiny.

As previously mentioned, there is a natural tendency to label advocacy journalism as the binary opposite of factual reporting, but there is a move in the scholarship to suggest that advocacy and informing are not necessarily exclusive

(Bachmann, 2019). According to Bachmann, advocate journalists insist that they adhere to professional standards, since they are undertaking journalism rather than propaganda, and therefore offer a more transparent viewpoint. But surely this transparency only occurs when the journalists are clear about being close to the advocates and the agenda they are pursuing. Whether the ABC journalist, Sarah Ferguson, was transparent in her advocacy to stop the export of live cattle to Indonesia will be further discussed within this thesis. However, this thesis asserts that *Four Corners*, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) provides a clear and obvious example of advocacy journalism, in which the media become the advocate on behalf of both the animal activists and then industry to secure government support or desired policy change.

Crisis and reputational damage

The aftermath of the *Four Corners* program has been noted within the widespread media rhetoric as a crisis for the live export industry and it is clear when reviewing the underpinning theory surrounding crisis management, that there are numerous similarities. There is no doubt that framing has emerged as a dominant model in media effects research (Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997), and it plays an essential part in the portrayal of a crisis. It should be noted that the majority of the public do not experience the crisis directly, but rather through the interpretative lens of the media, that filter and frame the content. This is illustrated when considering the event that provides the source material for the media stories that are the focus of this thesis. According to Seeger, Reynolds, and Sellnow (2009), a crisis is:

a specific, unexpected, and non-routine event[s] or a series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organisation’s high priority goals (p. 233).

As suggested by Aguilera (1998) and Penrose (2000), crises are also broad and complex, varying in both their scope and severity, and generally accepted in contemporary literature as the perception of events rather than the actual events themselves. In the context of this thesis, the ban of the export of live cattle to Indonesia has been described as a crisis by the media (Rout, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Wilson, 2011a, 2011b; Wright, 2011b), the respondents interviewed for this study

(Independent Politician A; Journalist A; Journalist B; Labor Politician A; Labor Politician B; Liberal Politician A; Liberal Politician B, Liberal Politician C) and politicians in Parliament (Bishop, 2011; Parke, 2011; Siewart, 2011; Thomson, 2011). The dichotomy for this thesis is that the events that occurred to the live export industry in June 2011 was considered a crisis for the animals, the industry and for the political decision-making process. As Karlsson (2012) comments, a crisis provides a challenging environment because of the constant changing of the crisis frames.

This thesis suggests that events that occurred to the live export of cattle in 2011 affected global food supply and that there was long-term impact to Australia's reputation as a secure trading partner due to the nature of the policy shifts. The impetus of trade flows between countries has been topic of interest among international trade scholars. Earlier literature, which focuses on geography, economic development, culture, and trade policies, ignores the role of governing institutions in determining how trade moves between countries. Recently, scholars have begun to examine how the institutional environment of a society affects its trade with other countries (Babetskaia-Kukharchuk & Maurel, 2003; Ederington, Levinson & Minier, 2005), but there is little scholarship that focuses on the impact of reputational damage to trade relations between countries. Nor is there research with a focus on an entire industry, in difference to recent research by Ingenhoff et al (2018) that considers how varying degrees of media-constructed associations between organisations and country of origin affected their reputation in times of crisis. Payne (2006) believes that the interaction of reputation and response may be such that traditional strategies do not apply in all cases, and subsequently as suggested by Grundy and Moxon (2013), when considering an appropriate crisis response, organisations must assess the type and scale of crisis they are facing. Coombs (2007) considers that the first priority in any crisis is to protect stakeholders from harm, not to protect the reputation, and that to be ethical, crisis managers must begin their efforts by using communication to address the physical and psychological concerns of the victims. It is only after this foundation is established that crisis managers should turn their attentions to reputational assets.

But according to Coombs (2007) an organisation with a more favourable prior reputation will still have a stronger post-crisis reputation because it has more reputational capital to spend than an organisation with an unfavourable prior reputation. As a result, a favourable prior reputation means an organisation suffers less and rebounds more quickly. This response was difficult for the live export industry, which has faced opposition since its conception.

There is no doubt that the legitimacy of the trade in live export of animals was questioned during 2011. Similarly, by using an organisational management theory approach and borrowing from impression management theorists such as Goffman (1974), Elsbach (1994) wrote of the cattle industry in California, and suggests organisations may protect or enhance their legitimacy following controversies that violate social norms if the controversy is followed by an acknowledgement and a move toward more normative structures. Further research into the link between legitimacy of the live export of cattle considering management theory approach would provide more detail on the linkages between reputation, legitimacy and trade flow.

To date, one of the missing ingredients to the theoretical approaches considered when approaching this research topic is the role of pressure groups, such as the animal activists who are principal actors in this discussion. According to Schlesinger (1989) such actors lack “definitional power”. This is in stark contrast to the power elites, upon whom journalists have traditionally relied on for source material and who have an advantage over fringe or dissent groups due to their recognised authority. But there is evidence in recent years “where elite groups have been defeated in public debate, by the activities of relatively marginal political actors” (McNair, 2018, p. 148).

In the context of this thesis, the animal welfare movement can be categorised as a marginal political actor that must “compensate for a lack of institutional status and authority” (McNair, 2018, p. 155). However, as said by McNair, the “credibility of the media’s fourth-estate role requires, in conditions of a liberal democracy, the maintenance of journalist’s relative autonomy from power elites” (2018, p.167) thus paving the way for marginal actors to gain access to the mainstream media. Grant (2000) suggests that marginalised political actors

frequently gain “access to a public voice by cultivating and generating controversies” (p. 116). A recent study by Kim and McCluskey (2015) noted that the strategy adopted by the pressure groups to generate media interest will have an impact upon its success, which will be examined in Chapter Nine.

Policy, politics, politicians, advocates and the media.

Influencing the policy agenda has long been viewed as one of the most important sources of political power. Castells (2011) suggests that power relationships are the “foundation of society, as institutions and norms are constructed to fulfil the interests and values of those in power” (p. 773). Meanwhile literature supports the premise that the media represents the “privileged means of communication” among multiple venues which are often “tightly linked”, with “shifts in attention in one ... quickly followed by shifts in others” (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). As previously discussed, this thesis is informed by the view of Dearing and Rogers (1996, p. 6) that agenda-setting is an “ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public and policy elites.”

The web of influences that affect the policy making process is intricate and variable, as are the conditions for the formation of public opinion. This study will examine how policy can be manipulated by not only the media but by an interplay of advocates, the backbench and journalists, to influence the policy decision makers. Previous studies have generated valuable and important insights into the workings of journalism and policy per se but there has been little direct research into the influence of news on live export policy development.

There is an almost unlimited amount of policy issues that could reach the top of the policy agenda. Few do. Those that do, do so because of positioning and posturing by those who have an interest in pushing their agenda. The case study discussed in this research is an example of a fringe issue becoming mainstream and a reaction to policy which is reflected by the issues emerging into the public arena. Downs (1998) addresses the premise that there exists an “issue-attention cycle” where various issues appear in the public domain to stay there for some time and

then disappear while largely unresolved (p. 38). It is perhaps prudent to note Baumgartner and Jones (1993) point out that “virtually every study of agenda-setting has found ... that issues emerge and recede from the public agenda without important changes to the fundamental issues themselves” (p. 10). They also note that peak periods of change occur when opinion polls reflect public concern with the same problems, thus making the public - and voter - intrinsically involved in the agenda-setting process by becoming a participant and not simply a bystander.

In some cases, of which live export is a significant example, there has been a trigger, which then focuses the public, the media and the government on an issue that was previously not high on the agenda. Hill (2014), Hogwood and Gunn (1984) touch on the idea that some policy responses to intense and focused public campaigns have long-term effects

It is also plausible that the realisation of the costs of policy change may only occur after legislation has passed and policy is being implemented. This is not the case with the live export industry, as this research paper will show, as evidence collated for this research suggests that the economic implications of the policy change that banned the live export of cattle to Indonesia formed the basis of the industry’s fightback and this was reported on by elements of the media at the very beginning of the crisis, but gained momentum later in the narrative (McKenna & Shanahan, 2011).⁷

As one element influencing policy, the backbench comprises of individual politicians, who collectively can exercise influence over policy decisions, which in most cases is achieved through committees (Thomas & Frier, 2018). Traditionally there has been very little attention given to the media’s interaction with the backbench, in part because the government is run by cabinet and their role is therefore seen as secondary (Payne, 1997). The public’s perception of the role of the backbencher in the political process is produced largely by media attention.

Scholarly discourse pertaining to the backbench’s use of new technology introduced via the Internet during the period considered by this thesis is limited. There is no doubt that the evolution of the web provided disadvantaged parties

⁷ Coalition politician C; Industry spokesperson A; Journalist A; PR consultant.

with opportunities to gain more attention from the public, with evidence suggesting that the minor parties were more likely to use web-based media. Chen and Smith (2010) states that:

... parties on the left, such as the Green Party, are often viewed as having a stronger, participatory grass roots organisational culture said to be consistent with the interactive capacities of the Internet. On the other hand, parties with older consistencies may favour more established communication channels (p. 8). _

According to Thomas and Frier (2018, p. 112), “Backbenchers working to change the law may reach out to pressure groups for assistance, and pressure groups may also seek out parliamentarians who support the groups’ policy goals”, suggesting that it is a symbiotic relationship.

On the part of the advocate, the Internet offers a new means of political access (Dalton, 2014), having the ability to contact politicians and sign petitions such as what occurred during the live export debate in 2011. According to Dalton, contemporary calls for direct citizen action are attempts for, “ordinary people to pressure the political system to be responsive to public opinion” (p. 81).

Prior research has investigated selected aspects of the interrelation between news and its social contexts that has included journalism and its political, economic imperatives and organisational structures (Baker, 2002; Lewis, 2008; McQuail, 2010; Papathanassopoulos, S & Negrine, R, 2010; Street, 2011). Yet as suggested in Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer (2012) there has been little academic attention paid to the area that deconstructs the role of the media in the live export policy process and the direct effects on public policy and political decision-making. Perhaps, as observed by Walgrave and Lefevere (2010), one of the reasons why there has not been a conclusive answer as to the impact of the media on live export public policy is that it is too broad a question and too difficult to quantify.

This thesis is heavily informed by the relationships that exist between the advocate, the politician and the journalist and the politics that drives decision-making. An informed and knowledgeable electorate dictates that democratic politics be played out in the public arena. Evidence exists that, since the eighteenth century, the media have grown evermore important to the smooth workings of the

democratic purpose (McNair, 1995, 2006, 2012; McNair, Flew, Harrington & Swift, 2017)). This thesis will further consider how political communication is largely mediated communication, altered by the media in its role as reporters and commentators (McNair, 1995, p. 27), and where the media becomes initiators of the action and political actors in their own right.

The relationship between the journalist and the politician has been persistently vexed, particularly that of the journalist who reports from within the parliamentary press gallery. While both politician and journalist aim to publicise the work of the Parliament, their agendas differ. It could be suggested that this struggle between the politician and the media are essentially a struggle over the influence of public opinion. Chalmers says:

There has inevitably been tension between parliamentarians and the gallery. In the long history of Westminster parliaments, a minority of MPs loathed journalists. The majority of MPs, however, regard the gallery as part of the Parliament and recognise its vital function of informing Australia and the world of the work of the Parliament, the executive government and the opposition (2011, p. 22).

This is supported by comments made by Malcolm Turnbull, the former federal Member for Wentworth, who wrote, “in Canberra the politicians are the foxes and the press gallery the hounds” (Sykes, 2012, p. 53). Indeed, he suggests that the “most effective check and balance on government has been an independent press” (2012, p. 59). It is prudent to reconsider this comment in the context of the remarks by the ACT Chief Minister in the introduction of this study, who spoke of bypassing the media because of its role as a filter.

The notion of interdependence features strongly in the literature on politician-reporter relations (Berkowitz, 2009; Brants, de Vreese, Moller & Van Praag, 2010; Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006). Though both actors are engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship, it is a relationship involving constant negotiation (Berkowitz, 2009) in part due to what Blumler & Gurevitch (1995) find as being the interdependent, “mutually dependent” and “mutually adaptive” nature of the relationship, despite their pursuit of different yet overlapping goals (p. 476).

This idea of a fluctuating relationship is one that appears in the literature that examines the journalist- source relationship and can be applied in this instance. Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987), cite the reason behind the unease in the relationship between the journalist and the politician is due to the jostling of power between the two and can be considered as a battle over “secrecy, confidence, censorship and publicity” (p. 2). As to which of the two actors manages to take control of the presentation of information at any given time is fluid and “contextual, equivocal, transitory, and unresolved ... played out in the eternal dance of secrecy and revelation characterising knowledge/power relations”(Ericson, Baranek & Chen, 1987, p. 2).

Voltmer and Brants (2011) contest that context has a direct correlation to the balance of the relationship between the journalist and the politician and include the following as influences: a) the issue at hand, b) potential damage to credibility, c) public opinion, d) changing communication technologies and e) the cultural and political context of the communication (p. 5). Accordingly, they find that the amount of power either can exert is dependent on the circumstances (p.5). Meanwhile Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) suggest that the relationship between politician and the media is based on the different roles that the media and the politician have with the public; with the journalist one of “enlightening the electorate” in difference from that of the politician who has the primary objective of “persuasion” (p. 485). Maurer and Beiler (2017) go further, saying that politicians want to control the release of information, whereas the journalist wants to release information. Such arguments illustrate why the media and politicians can be at odds. However, it is prudent to recall that neither politician nor journalist could exist without a level of interdependency, and the lines of power are thus blurred. How this power dichotomy affects reactive policy change will be discussed within this thesis.

When analysing how policy change occurs within government, the role of the political journalist as a central figure is raised in scholarship. This research considers a natural extension is considering the relationships of the Canberra press gallery journalists and federal politicians as a vital contributor to the quality of political information disseminated to the Australian public. It could be said that the

press gallery has taken on a role as being the central information point for national political news, with representation from all the major news outlets across the country located within Parliament House, Canberra. Australia's press gallery is unique in the Westminster system. Very few parliaments allow members of the press such unfettered access to a legislature and executive as occurs in Canberra, which had its origins in 1927 when the provisional parliament house was built (Chalaby, 1998; Ester, 2004; Neveu, 2002).

The press gallery is not without its critics and has the nickname the rat pack, suggesting that it feeds off gossip and statements from politicians and their staff (Matchett, 2006). Former press gallery stalwart Rob Chalmers writes, the "myth of a gallery rat pack arises almost every time big political issues surface. Those injured or feeling badly served by media reports complain of bad treatment by the gallery rat pack, the inference being that the gallery acts in unison and collectively" (Chalmers, 2011, p. 231). Matchett claims that while the gallery was once mainly interested in the gladiatorial combat of politics, today it has many members who are focused on policy. He writes: "The gallery exists to keep the politicians honest in the way they exercise power and us all informed on public policy ... And we need the press gallery to explain to us, and often to the politicians, what their policies mean" (2006, p. 25). The gallery comes under fire as being separate from the real Australia, isolated from the community. Michelle Grattan, a long-standing member of the gallery, is quoted as saying that it:

can be argued that journalists in the press gallery are in fact more divorced from the real-world than the politicians. The journalists live in Canberra full time unlike the parliamentarians (Payne, 1997, p. 9).

This view certainly resonates in regional and rural Australia where there is an entrenched view that the national political process including that of the media are often believed to be out of touch with reality (Delaney, 2001).

Following the defeat of the Labor party in 2013, many political biographies have been published; however, their reliability as an unbiased source for reference is questionable, providing entertainment value more than deep political insight. Ben Pimlott says (1990, p. 214): "many people with a deep interest in politics, including quite a few practitioners, look to biography for knowledge and insight. But

what is on offer so frequently disappoints". As Pimlott has noted, among book-buyers: "celebrity is the draw, quality is secondary. It is, perhaps, this market pressure that is most responsible for making the generality of political biographies valets to the famous" (Pimlott, 1990, p. 223). Books and biographies written as recollections by those from within the parliament allow for some insight into past events and can give some context to the unfolding of events. In some cases, it becomes easily apparent that the biographies are written with a political slant and are overtly one sided. Such an example is Walsh's book, *The Stalking of Julia Gillard* (2013), with its tone and the language unapologetically pro-Gillard. Therefore, while this book may provide an interesting record of events, its academic value is limited. This belief of being circumspect when using political memoirs as a research source is supported by former Liberal politician Peter Coleman, quoted in Selth (2006), who says there is a need to exercise caution when drawing upon accounts by politicians who have a reputation to protect and/or advance their own political reputation. Coleman says that political memoirs "are usually full of lies and spin and quickly fill the remainder shelves" (p. 106). That aside, recent Labor party history, particularly during the years 2007 until 2013, has spurred almost too many political biographies to mention, with authors including, but not limited to, politicians Jim Chalmers (2013), Chris Bowen (2013), Wayne Swan (2014), Lindsay Tanner (2012, 2013) and Greg Combet with Mark Davis (2014) whose books sit on the shelves alongside those accounts written by numerous political onlookers and commentators, many of whom emanate from within the press gallery.

According to Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), politicians and voters have become increasingly dependent on the media and the messages that the media disseminates, in part due to the ever-fragmented nature of contemporary society in which the influence of the nuclear family, social class, religion and political parties has decreased. In the British context, Negrine (1994) writes that the media have clearly made a difference to politics, while Australian media theorist McNair argues that the media are important to the political process in direct ways (1995, p. 12) as either the voice of the people or as representative of public opinion. An established relationship between politics and the media exists and is well documented, with this research paper supporting scholarship that notes the relationship between

media and politicians to be symbiotic, with the two groups needing each other to function. It is because of the existence of this dual dependent relationship that politicians provide a stream of information to the media, usually via their media adviser, who in turn gives the politician access to a mass audience. As a result, politicians and politics dominate the news coverage (Johnson-Cartee, 2005).

There seems to be little argument that politicians view the role of the media as an essential part of the democratic process (Fitzgerald, 2008) and therefore are required to form a relationship with them. This in turn opens a gateway for the public to access government information. Meanwhile Dunlop writes (2013):

[m]ost people's day-to-day involvement in the machinations of government is outsourced to the political class – not only the politicians themselves but also the bureaucrats, advisers, policy experts, party hacks and all the rest of them ... the other key member of the class are journalists - particularly the political journalists who literally mediate the running of the country through their newspaper articles, their opinion columns, their television programs and their radio shows (p. 25).

Salter (2007, p. 52) argues that journalists decide what the public should and should not know from a base of habit, prejudice and commercial interest, particularly those interests of the newspaper owners and this theory links into the concept of how news is decided. Findings within this study support his and other observations (Young, 2004, 2007) that, even before the first word is written, a bias exists due to the editorial practices of the newspaper for which the journalist is writing. With News Corp accounting for almost 70 per cent of newspaper daily circulation and Fairfax roughly 20 per cent (Carson & Muller, 2017), there is limited opportunity for non-aligned reporting (McNair, Flew, Harrington & Swift, 2017) in Australia.

There is no denying that the media are an essential part of the political process in Australia, as in other western-style democracies. McNair wrote (2000; p. ix) that now more than ever before, "the media are politics and politics are the media". Yet with the selective nature of the media, and its propensity to focus on the most dramatic and colourful of stories, the media can be accused of painting a political picture that is neither complete nor objective. It is because of the selectivity that occurs within the media that there is a perception that the media

are in the businesses of shaping, rather than mirroring, the political landscape. Julia Gillard, in her role as Deputy Leader and former Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, said that she saw the role of journalist as having to:

Develop a relationship with people that is sufficiently disarming so that they get information that they otherwise wouldn't. Their job is one of engagement ... they are doing a job and their job is not to act as our advocates or press secretaries or ciphers ... they rightly should be critical, probing, questioning ..." (Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 68).

As to the other partner in the relationship, the politician, it could be suggested that they, because of their status as elected representatives of the people, are the primary definers of the news because they are: "those people who are the first to have their version of an event accepted by the news media" (Kuhn, 2007, p. 95). Thus, politicians, particularly those in government are in a position to set the news agenda. Former secretary of the federal government's Treasury department, Ken Henry, is quoted as saying ministers in general are afraid of adverse publicity if a public policy goes wrong, and "what matters most is not whether the [media] story is true ... but if the story is positive or negative, complementary or critical, supportive or hostile" (Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 16).

Limitations of literature

The topic that this thesis is tackling is complex and multi-faceted and goes to explain why previous scholarship has been unable to determine the direct influences on policy change in the agricultural sector. There is a dearth of literature that considers the aforementioned journalistic theoretical approaches to the media coverage of live export. Using political communication together with advocacy as the conduit for discovery elevates the complexity of the problem and how it can be determined what influences policy change. Many significant voices are often absent within the scope of previous scholarship, most notably the advocates themselves. This thesis fills the gaps of previous scholarship by examining how public attitudes on specific social issues can shift and influence decision makers by using influences that include the media as well as the utilisation of internal and external political instability.

Chapter summary

This chapter has considered previous academic scholarship pertaining to the themes that emerge from the central research question of what influences federal government policy using the live export industry as a case study. It finds limited scholarship examining successful advocacy campaigns on live export policy with little prescriptive advice for future advocates, journalists and other media professionals. While reflecting upon prior scholarship and considering the role of the media in influencing public policy decisions, this chapter has considered the relationship between the media, the public, politicians and advocates.

Acknowledging previous academic discourse that places agenda-setting as a central motivation of the media, this chapter also considers bias, framing and the theory behind the power of the image before considering the literature pertaining to the specifics of the case study itself. The following chapter serves to outline the aims, philosophical underpinnings and methods used in the conduct of this research.

Using evidence collected through deconstructing newspaper articles, parliamentary debate and interviews, this research underpins best practice and serves to provide a blueprint for considering the main factors that influence a government to change policy.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

This chapter outlines the aims, philosophical underpinnings and methods used in the conduct of this research, to reveal a discourse on what influences federal government policy, with reflection of prior academic scholarship the focus of Chapter Two. By considering previous scholarship, it becomes evident that there is a lack of detailed investigation into the direct effect on live export policy from a specific media campaign. There has also been limited inquiry into how to influence decision makers into changing or amending policy decisions in their favour within the live export industry, and which can provide a blueprint on future advocacy in this industry and others. This chapter outlines the theoretical philosophical underpinnings and methods used in the deconstruction of newspaper articles, interviews and Hansard transcripts that provide an insight into the policy decisions that affected the live export of cattle to Indonesia in 2011. Prior difficulties in obtaining conclusive evidence as to the source of influence on policy are mostly due to the myriad of factors that converge to amend a policy decision, therefore proving it difficult to isolate the mitigating factors that achieve policy change. This thesis has chosen to tackle this issue from a different angle, by admitting at the outset that there are many actors in the mix, and by using a case study to illustrate the trajectory that can drive policy change.

Theoretical underpinnings

In determining which research method was appropriate for this thesis, it became apparent early in the process that the choice of methodology depended on the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which the research is based. This in turn had implications for the research method employed. Such evaluation is supported by the writings of Creswell (2003) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill

(2007), who suggest that the research philosophy adopted for a project contains important assumptions about the researcher's view of the world. Following on from Creswell's observations, Mertens believes that the "exact nature of the definition of research is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework" (Mertens, 2005, p. 2) thus placing the method chosen as the catalyst to the unpacking of relationships, making the collection of evidence required to support the research and how it is studied an integral part of the outcome of the research project. As Dixon, Singleton and Straits argue (2015, p. xvi) "methodology is the heart of the social science, it is what distinguishes social science from journalism and social commentary, from the humanities and natural sciences".

The term "paradigm" appears frequently when considering methodology and refers to the theoretical framework employed throughout the research paper. Defined as "a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 22) the paradigm sets the perimeter within which the research is to be conducted. While first considering employing the pragmatic paradigm to this research question (Creswell, 2003, p. 11) it became apparent that the changeableness of the pragmatic paradigm did not suit the research question nor provide the structure required if the findings of this study were to be a useful tool for the profession. Given this perimeter, the transformative paradigm was more appropriate in this instance where "inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda" (Creswell, 2003, p. 9).

Having affinity with both constructivism and pragmatism, the transformative paradigm is a persuasive framework for research that incorporates social justice and a voice for the marginalised (Mertens, 1999, 2007, 2009, 2010). Within the context of this study, the animal activists were the marginalised group in the first instance, as they were a minority group prosecuting a fringe issue on behalf of the voiceless cattle. However, during the progression of this research narrative, the cattle producers became marginalised from the public by the media, before they became empowered after the public furore against the trade subsided. How the groups were marginalised is assessed by the balance of the argument within the media discourse as demonstrated within the research data.

The transformative paradigm assumes that there may be many different cultural norms guiding ethical behaviour and that knowledge is not neutral and that the purpose of knowledge is to improve society. By emphasising the use of qualitative data collection but not excluding quantitative data collection, the transformative paradigm presents an ability to outline the complexity of the research question as well as to access those who believe that they have been marginalised. This is in perfect parallel to the work of the advocate (and to a certain extent to politicians and journalists) who believes and acts as a voice for those who have none. Figure 1 below provides a visualisation of transformative paradigm, with the differing fonts and colours indicating the importance and relevance of the nouns used to describe the model.



Figure 1. Transformative paradigm word cloud

The transformative paradigm requires the researcher to consider the uses of his or her work and that these be linked to social justice. Given the focus that this study has on animal welfare and food security, the relevance of the transformative paradigm to this study is abundantly clear. Another attractive characteristic of the

transformative paradigm is the “interactive link between the researchers and participants” (Mertens, 2009, p. 11) which can easily be demonstrated in this thesis by the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants, lasting up to an hour.

Another feature of the transformative paradigm that appeals to this thesis is the requirement for the researchers to engage in critical self-reflection and work to counter biases and assumptions (Mertens, 2009). This was particularly crucial given that the principal researcher for this study had been previously employed by one of the significant actors in the unfolding events of 2011.

Therefore, in seeking to arrive at findings that will advance professional practice this thesis is well served by the transformative paradigm. The paradigm provides a framework designed to help those involved in advocating for a change in public policy to address a perceived injustice.

Research design

In fundamental terms a research design connects the research questions to the data and provides the basic plan for the research. As previously mentioned, this research is influenced by the transformative paradigm and builds upon a prior body of scholarship that draws on the theory of agenda-setting combined with a study of media practice and applies ethnographic case-study and a mixed-method approach. Using a mixed-method approach allowed for the newspaper content to be collated and accessed for volume, and content appraised for contextual interpretation required to answer the research question of what influences government policy in relation to the live export industry. By answering this research question using the mixed-method approach, other advocates and journalists who wish to address a perceived injustice gain an insight into a research methodology that provides substantive data set to inform the research discourse.

According to the writings of McNabb, ethnographic studies, while offering “the close up on the ground observation of people and institutions in real time” (Wacquant, 2003, p. 5), involve more uncertainty than many researchers are comfortable with (McNabb, 2004). However, using case studies allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific situation and identify various interactive

processes at work. According to Nisbet and Watt (1978, p. 7) “sometimes it is only by taking a practical instance that we can obtain a full picture of this interaction”. Although observation and interviews are most frequently used in case study, no method is excluded. Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1980, p. 52) brilliantly describe case study as “an umbrella term for a family of research methods that have in common the decision to focus on inquiry about an instance”. In this thesis, the live export industry which has been used as the case study, provides a clear context of the influences on government that resulted in changes to policy, while illustrating how advocates were able to steer the public and political agenda to achieve results.

Mixed methods research and the use of a case study: Live export

The use of case studies in research papers is considered a valid form of research. Bell believes that the case study is particularly appropriate for individual researchers since: “it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale” (1999, p. 10). Yin (2009, p. 13) defines case studies as a study that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.” Meanwhile Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 224) makes the valuable assertion that research is not always about proving something but more about learning something and claims that case studies are an ideal methodology to achieve this, making the process more about social inquiry. Understanding the context in which this case study is positioned is an important part of the progression of this research. Yin (2009, p. 13) explains that the case study methodology is useful for researchers who want “to cover contextual conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study.”

The ban on the live export industry that occurred in 2011 following the *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011), provides an interpretive and ethnographic framework for analysis. In parallel with the use of the live export as a case study, this thesis considers theoretical approaches such as news values, the public sphere, bias, framing and agenda setting as discussed in Chapter Two, as well as historical contextualisation in Chapter Four. Chapters Five, Six and Seven contain an analysis of the research sample, which comprises of newspaper content, parliamentary debates and interviews undertaken with politicians, industry

spokespeople, animal activists and journalists that relate to the live export of cattle to Indonesia after the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011). This evidence-based approach was selected due to the use of numerous types of data, thus providing “multiple sources of evidence ... [which] converges on the same topic” (Yin, 2009, p. 84) to enable a more accurate interpretation of the data (Jensen & Jankowski, 2002; Stake, 1995). Furthermore, it has the capacity to illuminate the specifics of a range of problems that need to be addressed within the research question.

By using the export of live cattle and events that occurred post the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) as a single- case study, the thesis argues that the animal and the industry advocates are clearly the two groups of advocates who dominated the narrative. This case study serves as an illustration of the momentum that needs to be achieved and can serve as a guide for determining the main influencers and influences leading to a change in federal government policy. Schramm (1971) said the:

... essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result (cited in Yin, 2009, p.12).

By considering the use of “decisions” at the core of case studies, the ban of live cattle Indonesia in 2011 by the Australian government was deemed to provide an appropriate subject matter on which to apply rigorous research.

According to Yin (2009, p 133), the analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed aspects of undertaking case study research, with a dependence on sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations. Academic literature on the live export ban in 2011 and the politics involved is limited, with articles by Munro (2014) and Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips (2012) broaching the subject of the public and media reaction. Tiplady et. al’s (2012) qualitative survey of Australians’ response to animal cruelty is an insightful and useful breakdown of audience reaction to the violent and graphic nature of the footage and thus the trade. Munro, writing as an academic advocating for animal rights, analyses the emotive issues including how and why the campaign petered out and addresses the social movement element of the story; he argues that:

the controversy that ensued in Australia provides a valuable case study of a social movement campaign's relationship to the mass media and the media's impact on public sentiment and political action" (2014, p. 5).

This study expands upon his thesis, provides scholarship and examines how policy change was achieved by pressure unleashed on policy decision makers, not only by the media, but also by backbenchers and the community that occurred within an environment of political instability. This study also expands upon the work of Chen (2016, p. 277) who writes that: "policy co-ordination is often absent when animals are involved, with drivers for policy change and development coming from a range of sources."

To arrive at the findings within this thesis, a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) to the data was applied, as outlined in Figure 3 (on page 68 of this thesis). Several stages of data collection were undertaken. Firstly, exploratory research to source newspaper articles and transcripts of parliamentary speeches on the topic of the live export of cattle to Indonesia after 30 May 2011 was undertaken with the intent of undertaking a content analysis of the data.

Matthes and Kohring (2008) suggested that future research measure media frames by using clusters. This thesis responded to such as suggestion by using in-depth analysis of qualitative material to develop a measurement tool that involved a system of open-coding that was then applied to newspaper articles, Hansard and interview transcripts to arrive at findings outlined in Chapter Nine. Open coding allowed the grouping of similar information and phrasing using abstract labels.

The television program

This thesis will argue that the news media framing of the events that occurred to the live export industry in 2011 relied heavily on the priming that preceded the newspaper coverage and the ABC *Four Corners* program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011). McNair said:

the way in which journalists frame events – from camera angle and soundtrack to word choice and narrative genres ... work to transform an event into a true and authentic story and, finally, into a form of expertise (2012, p.3-4).

Considering that priming in a media context refers to the effects of the content on the public's later behaviour, this thesis will examine who primed news media by evaluating who approached the ABC with the story and who supplied the initial footage. The researcher has then observed and compared the amount of time given to live export supporters and opponents. This resulted in the observation that the animal activists initially primed the ABC, as discussed in Chapter 9. It could be determined that objectivity was limited, given the clear message within the narrative of the visual framing. This then alludes to the question of whether the program was advocacy journalism. To reach a conclusion, the program was examined against the theoretical underpinning of advocacy journalism (Careless, 2000; Peuchaud, 2018), in which there is a pre-determined agenda.

Newspaper articles

Using the search engine Parlinfo Search, initially 805 newspaper articles published between 1 May 2011 and 31 December 2011 that referenced the export of live cattle to Indonesia were downloaded. Launched in 2008, Parlinfo Search allows researchers to search and obtain Australian parliamentary information including Hansard, bills, senate journals, votes and proceedings, notice papers, committee reports, the Parliamentary Handbook, newspaper clippings, media publications and podcasts (White, Missingham & Brettell, 2010). This integrated database was deemed appropriate due to the nature of the research question. The words used for the broad search included: animal welfare, cattle industry, Indonesia, abattoirs, and live animal exports. The articles in this research sample were sourced from newspapers that had a permanent presence in Canberra's press gallery. This comprised of two national broadsheets, two national tabloids and all state-based mastheads as well as two weekly publications specifically targeting rural and regional Australia⁸, all owned by either Rupert Murdoch's News Limited (now known as News Corp) or Fairfax. The exception was *The West Australian*, owned by

⁸ *The Australian* and the *Australian Financial Review*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Herald Sun*, *Advertiser* from South Australia, *Mercury* covers Tasmania, the *Courier Mail* Queensland, *Sydney Morning Herald* in Sydney, the *Age* Melbourne and the *Canberra Times* from Canberra and rural weekly's *The Land*, and *The Herald and Weekly Times*.

Seven West Media but chosen due to the importance the live export of cattle plays to the Western Australian economy.⁹ The data search also retrieved differing types of news media content including news articles written by journalists (such as Alford, 2011a; Wilson, 2011a; Rout, 2011a), editorials written by editors (Australian, 2011; Northern Territory News 2011) and opinion pieces written by journalists, pundits, academics, politicians and activists (such as Calacouras, 2011a; 2011b; Morgan-Schmidt, 2011; O’Connor,2011; Saragih, 2011;).

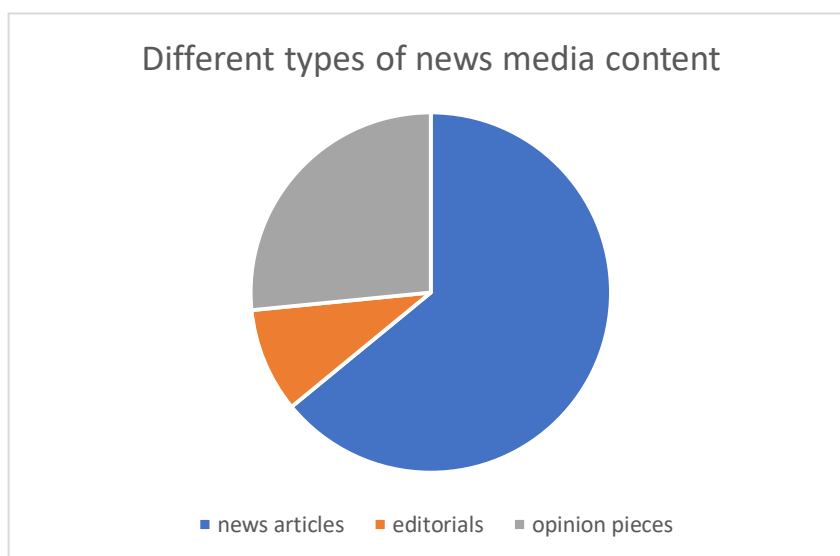


Figure 2: Different types of news media content

According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996) the task of content analysis is to “impose some sort of order... singling out the key features that we think are important and to which we want to pay attention” (p. 31). To achieve this, a quantitative content analysis approach was applied to this research sample, and data collated and grouped according to the volume and frequency of mentions

⁹ The merger of Fairfax and Rural Press in 2006 brought the mastheads of the *North Queensland Register*, *Queensland Country Life*, *The Land*, *Stock & Land*, *Farm Weekly*, and *Stock Journal* together with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Sun-Herald*, *The Australian Financial Review* and *The Canberra Times*. Competing news organisation News Corp Australia, owned by Rupert Murdoch has the following mastheads in their stable: *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Herald Sun*, *The Courier-Mail*, *The Advertiser*, *The Mercury*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Northern Territory News*, together with their Sunday/weekend editions and wire service *Australian Associated Press*.

(Neuendorf, 2017). However, as suggested by Shoemaker and Reese “humanistic content study naturally gravitates towards qualitative analysis ... reducing large amounts of text to quantitative data and does not provide a complete picture of meaning” (1996, p. 32). To satisfy the research outcomes, analysis was achieved by examining the relationship between the text and meaning by paying attention to audience, media and context using a qualitative approach as shown in Figure 3 below.

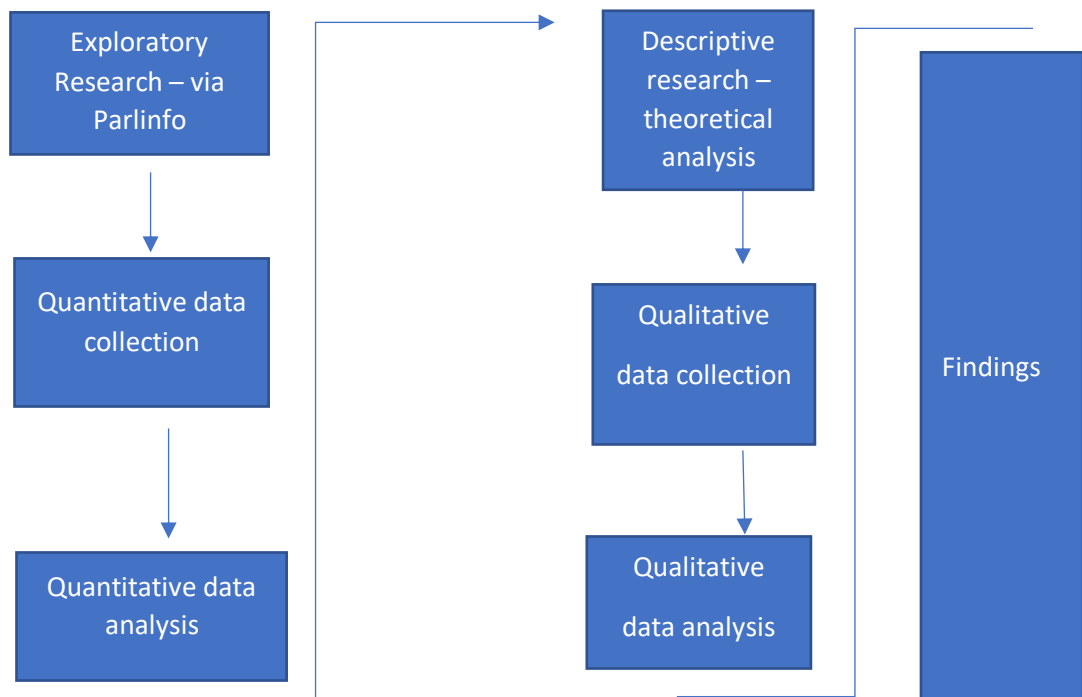


Figure 3: Process of mixed methods research based on Creswell (2003, p. 209).

Once retrieved, the 805 articles were put into clusters determined by the month of publication, with a final sample of 441 articles appearing in June and 210 articles in July 2011 being considered for this research.

In the days following the program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011), there was an intense media response via numerous news outlets, with the story dominating airtime. Initially this research paper was determined to investigate the

newsprint media response to live exports, using the days prior to the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) as the beginning of the research timeline, up until 31 December 2011. This decision was reviewed after retrieving and downloading 805 newspaper articles, and evidence pointing to the bulk of the newspaper activity occurring during the months of June and July. This coincided with the government's policy announcements. While the initial rationale behind working with such a large volume of raw material was to support an observation of the way that the news media function and the influence that they subsequently yielded, it was more appropriate to consider the articles that were published in parallel to policy announcements, providing a more robust illustration of the involvement of the media in the policy decision-making process.

Newspaper articles were chosen for this study due to the agenda-setting role that newsprint holds in the media landscape, and the influence that the newspapers exert over other forms of media coverage such as radio and television. Contrary to McCombs and Shaw (1972), who argue that in most instances "there is little discernible difference between the agenda-setting powers of television and newspapers" (p. 2), this study points to evidence that indicates many broadcast news programs review the day's newspapers as part of their programming.¹⁰ Newspapers also have more space to cover a wide range of news, whereas broadcast news has much less capacity, with TV news restricted to 30 second grabs (Turner, 2004).

A media content analysis (Lasswell, 1927; Neuendorf, 2017) was then undertaken of the 651 newspaper articles that were sourced from 14 national mastheads. To undergo a content analysis of the newspaper articles, a coding schema was devised to measure similarity of themes within the text. To assist with the coding, the content was subjected to a range of questions which allowed themes to emerge. As suggested by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) these questions included: What are is being said? What is being accomplished? How is the issue talked about, characterised, and what was understood to be going on? What

¹⁰ Journalist A; Journalist B (Interviewee) (2016, May 25).

assumptions are being made? What was learnt from these notes? Why were the notations included?

For clarity Liamputtong and Ezzy's (2005, p.272) recommendation of formatting data using three columns was employed, with the first column housing the text of the newspaper articles and interview transcripts, the second column containing the initial code notes highlighting the first impression of the intent of the article, while the third column listed the final code. The final code represented the key themes that emerged in the text which are discussed from Chapter Five through to Chapter Eight of this thesis. The evidence from this analysis was then triangulated with evidence obtained within the 17 transcripts of face-to-face interviews with specifically chosen respondents (Appendix A) and transcripts from 83 parliamentary speeches that had also been accessed using the same coding method as previously mentioned. Together this evidence has formed findings that illustrate how policy can be achieved by advocates.

When deconstructing the newspaper articles, it soon became apparent that within the media's reporting of the live export crisis following the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), dominant themes were emerging, and these themes are further discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. This study regarded a theme in live export debates as dominant when it appeared across more than one masthead and on more than two successive days. The decision was based on determining that journalistic news values existed within the commentary if the same theme appeared in more than one newspaper article (Harcup & O'Neil, 2017) and that the emerging material was not just the penchant of one journalist alone, dominated by his or her belief systems (Donsbach, 2004).

By analysing the themes within the newspaper articles, it becomes evident that the way the content is presented in the articles results in how the argument is framed. Framing is a popular concept within the media literature and aligned within the academic discourse and discipline of agenda-setting. This research suggests that the themes emerge within the narrative due to explicit framing on the part of the journalist/politician/lobbyist/activist, therefore indicating an intent to offer a point of view as determined by the framer, which in turn can directly correlate to a political strategy.

It is argued within this thesis that the framing of an article, or the agenda under which the article is written, does not develop in a political vacuum. By assessing the ideological nature of media content and paying more attention to “what is being said and how it is said” (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 222), it is possible to evaluate which frame or premise is dominating the news stories and why. It could be suggested that how the media frames what is said is shaped by the power relations that exist between multiple factors and stakeholders who are the players in the narrative. In acknowledging that framing is manipulated by external factors, it is important to consider the context within which the media event occurred, which is undertaken in this paper by considering the media reliance on “official” sources such as politicians with their specific ideologies and belief systems so determined and dependent on party affiliations.

Corwin and Kruse describe framing as “defining the boundaries of the debate by placing the question within a certain sphere of meaning” (2010, p. 68). Presentation of a wide range of frames, or angles to the story, allows the public to gain a greater understanding of an issue and make informed evaluations based on balanced arguments. In deconstructing the frames within the newspaper articles, it was prudent to recall the framing attributes as described by Entman (1993). These included defining the problem, casual interpretation, moral judgment and treatment recommendation (p. 54). Reading each newspaper article as a single unit, the researcher recognised it was important to challenge the assumptions being made, consider the sources quoted, the language used and identify the narrative that was evolving. Frames emerged that included blame, mistrust and conflict, of which conflict was by far the most evident.

This research illustrates that there was no lack of differing angles explored in the media reporting of live export during the period of 2011. This study argues that how the media framed the issues within their reporting had a significant impact on how people understood the issues at hand and elaborates on how the framing changed the narrative of the story throughout the time these issues dominated the media agenda.

Hansard

This thesis uses transcripts of parliamentary speeches to substantiate claims made within the media (Willingham, 2011b; Peake, 2011) that activity occurred within the Parliament pertaining to the live export of cattle to Indonesia in 2011. The Hansard transcripts were sourced via the Parlinfo data base using the broad keywords of live export and the parameters restricted by date. A content analysis of the Hansard transcripts was undertaken, using the same coding schema (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) as used with the newspaper articles to ensure that any parallels in themes could be easily identified.

In 2011, the Senate sat for 56 days while the House of Representatives was in session for 64 days which gave limited opportunity. When the *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program aired, the House of Representatives was in session while the Senate was in Senate Estimates, being in the lead-up to the winter break (Appendix F). All proceedings in both the House of Representatives and the Senate are recorded in *Hansard*, and transcripts are available to access via Parlinfo. There are numerous options within the parliamentary process that provide opportunity for politicians to make speeches; however, due to the number of politicians and the limited time that parliament is in session, speaking spots can be highly sought after, particularly if a topic is contentious or high-profile. While the Federation Chamber, which operates in parallel to the main House of Representative chamber, is available for MPs, many choose not to use the Federation Chamber as it is not as high-profile as the main chamber and does not tend to catch the attention of the media. On both sides of politics, politicians who wish to speak on a topic list their names with the parliamentary whip's office who in turn decide who speaks when. Independents are also given limited speaking times.

During the parliamentary session coinciding with the ABC program there were 83 speeches about live export made across both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Upon accessing the data, 43 speeches from the House of

Representatives, and 40 speeches from the Senate were deconstructed and analysed (Appendix G).

The politicians that speak to a bill, argue for or against policy decisions decided upon by either Cabinet, the party room (Coalition) or caucus (Labor). When a MP or senator is given a speaking spot on a bill, the ministerial office responsible for the policy will circulate talking points to ensure that everyone is on the same page and repeating the party message. It is the independent politician who has the luxury to be able to hold the government to account, ask the awkward questions and make statements in parliament that are not aligned to any mainstream political party or philosophical leaning. The independent politician interviewed for this research paper reiterated this point, saying “being unaligned to any party means that my focus is entirely on listening and responding to my electorate, making sure that their issues are being heard in Canberra”.¹¹ But given that the fundamental ideology behind the Westminster system is that all MPs and senators are in Canberra on behalf of a cohort of Australians and therefore are the people’s representative, finding a balance between what their electorate says and what is the party line can be difficult for the politician. It was clear from the transcripts considered in the research sample that most speakers who spoke to the issue of live export in parliament either had an electorate which was affected by the ban on live exports or was an advocate for banning the trade. The one noticeable MP absent from the speaking lists for live export was the federal member for Lingiari, Warren Snowden MP. The sitting Labor MP from the Northern Territory was in an unenviable situation. While his electorate was to feel the ban acutely, he could hardly speak up against the ban for fear of upsetting the balance in the Parliament; and he was a Gillard backer in the leadership war with Rudd.

Speeches made in parliament are steeped in procedure and protocol and there is a certain formality to the way in which arguments are presented. This can also inform the vocabulary and the tone of the speeches. Even Question Time, which may look like an unmanageable ruckus, is pre-planned, with strategy

¹¹ Independent politician A (Interviewee) (2016, February 16).

meetings held, led by the leader of government or opposition business in the Senate and similarly for the House of Representatives. Importantly, it is in the chambers of parliament that politicians are required to be truthful and not to mislead parliament. For press gallery journalists, parliamentary speeches can provide a source of material for stories and can provide a trajectory of a story as witnessed in the newspaper articles reporting on the live export crisis. Often statements made in parliament resurface in newsprint; this especially includes comments made during the House of Representatives Question Time, which is considered the most engaging and entertaining of parliamentary proceedings. Politicians often use the chamber to make references to their electorate, thus providing evidence on the public register that can be used as reference for years to come.

Interviews

Due to this research requiring the human participants, ethics approval was sought and granted from the University of Southern Queensland, Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix B & Appendix C) and a consent form was given to all participants for their signatures.

Reflective of the qualitative research as done by Karp (1996) in which respect is shown to the contributions to research by interviewees, 17 interviews were conducted in late 2015 and early 2016 with a sample of journalists, politicians, public relations professionals, industry spokespeople and an animal advocate, all who were directly involved in the live export industry and had a direct involvement with events that followed the broadcasting of the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011). The individuals selected represented an aware and knowledgeable professional group who added value to the research paper (Appendix A) as indicated by the listing below. Because of their personal experience of the issue (Karp, 1996), they are considered experts who make a valuable contribution to the research discussion. Herbst (1998) suggests that interviewees are experts and that their reflections are “theories” (p.31). This thesis employs a similar approach to the contributions made by interviewees, considering them as experts in their fields due to their lived experience, supported by theorists Herbst (1998) and Lane (1962).

Animal activist A – worked as a policy officer with an animal welfare organisation at the heart of the narrative.

Coalition politician A – Western Australian senator, formally a large animal veterinarian.

Coalition politician B – New South Wales backbencher, former federal Minister for Agriculture.

Coalition politician C – Queensland backbencher, former Deputy Speaker. MP for the largest electorate in the state and one that is heavily reliant on cattle production.

Independent politician A – independent politician from Tasmania.

Industry spokesperson A - feedlot owner and cattle producer from Western Australia and state National Party politician.

Industry spokesperson B - cattle producer from Northern Territory.

Journalist A – Canberra Press Gallery, rural reporter with Fairfax.

Journalist B – Canberra Press Gallery, ABC journalist.

Journalist C – Canberra Press Gallery, former ABC then News Corp journalist.

Journalist D - Canberra Press Gallery, Fairfax journalist.

Labor politician A - Western Australian backbencher – on the backbench agricultural policy committee.

Labor politician B - Victorian backbencher with an urban electorate – on the backbench agricultural policy committee.

Labor politician C – Queensland MP – federal cabinet minister at the time of the crisis in 2011.

Parliamentary media adviser A – media adviser for a Labor cabinet minister.

Parliamentary media adviser B - media adviser for a coalition shadow Minister.

Public Relations (PR) consultant – hired by the livestock industry. Member of the handpicked team of advertising and marketing experts dubbed ‘The Team’ who elected John Howard and worked on all federal elections from 1996-2004.

Figure 4: List of respondents and their respective roles in 2011.

Experiences were then triangulated with data collected from newspaper articles and parliamentary speeches.

The respondents were chosen by the principal researcher because of their direct knowledge and, therefore, expertise of the events that occurred to the live export industry in 2011. An equal number of conservative and Labor party politicians were chosen, and journalists who were approached to take part were chosen from across all media stables within the press gallery. The public relations cohort for interview comprised of a media adviser from the government of 2011 and one from the opposition as well as a consultant from the private sector which provided input into the study from different perspectives. The industry spokespeople were chosen because of their first-hand knowledge of the sector, and the animal activist was approached to give a voice from the animal welfare perspective. Of the 21 potential respondents chosen to take part, three declined the opportunity to be involved with the study. They included one journalist who at the time of the study, had become a media adviser to the Prime Minister, a public relations provider who worked with the animal activists in 2011, and a former Labor cabinet minister.

Initial contact with potential interviewees was made by phone, followed closely by an email outlining the study and what would be required of them if they chose to take part, with the ethics forms attached.

Two important elements of interview techniques were adopted. First, the length of the interviews was not predetermined; rather, each interview ran sufficiently long for rapport to be established between the interviewer and interviewee. Secondly, because there existed the need for respondents to be free to recall and expound on events from their perspective, there was a reliance on guiding questions rather than a prescribed script.

Using semi-structured, in-depth interviews provided an opportunity to explore and draw out significant information and hear from first-hand experience, the impact the live export ban that occurred post the *Four Corners* program, had on interviewees. The interviews, which occurred in “one session per interviewee” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 93), also provided the opportunity to ask

professionals to provide specific information. Since the respondents were selected based on their extensive expert knowledge, experience and profile, they were able to provide educated and experiential viewpoints. Face-to-face interviews were undertaken. In-person interviews are known to provide researchers with a deeper understanding of what the informants say based on the presence of interpersonal communication cues such as body language (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Bryman agrees (2008), believing that face-face interviewing allows the interviewer to read the contextual situation, get a sense of mood, facial expression and body language, all of which provide useful signals.

It is important to note that interviewing is not always a neat linear process. This means that during a semi-structured interview, as in everyday conversation, connections are made between ideas that might lead the interviewee to refer to relevant events that occurred in another period of time. To accommodate the need for this type of flexibility, guiding questions were used from a prescriptive list of questions to direct the conversation, thus ensuring that the interview covered the topics relevant to the study without losing direction (Appendix H). At the beginning of each interview a brief outline of the research and the issues under exploration was provided. While all interviewees knew the interviewer in a professional capacity, the relationship the interviewer had with the topic due to previous employment within the cattle industry was declared to each respondent at the commencement of the interview to ensure transparency.

All 17 interviews commenced with an open or introductory question, a technique suggested by Kvale (1996) that asked the participant to explain their knowledge of the live export industry and the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) in their own words with as little interruption as possible. This often resulted in a clear narrative description of the respondents' involvement in both the industry and knowledge of the media interest that surrounded the industry in 2011. Gubrium and Holstein (2001, p. 96) state that by using this technique: "the researcher's disclosures are more than tactics ... rather the researcher often feels a reciprocal desire to disclose given the intimacy of the details being shared". This in turn leads to a breakdown of the hierarchical question-answer exchange, resulting in a research project that includes the cognitive and emotional reflections of the

researcher which add context and layers to the narrative. Ellis and Berger (2003) describe this as reflexive dyadic interviewing where, in addition to the researcher asking specific questions and the interviewee responding, the researcher also shares his or her own experience in a more conversational exchange. Once the introductory response concluded, follow-up questions were asked of the interviewees to elaborate on certain aspects of events that occurred, and although this meant that the interview was at times steered, the results closely resembled a conversation. Each interview varied in length from 30 minutes to over one hour depending on the time each of the participants had available.

During the process of interviewing it became obvious that an element of bias or influence on the part of the interviewer was being introduced to the process. This occurred due to the interviewer's previous employment and subsequent knowledge of the industry and of the events that surrounded the ban in 2011 and underpinned a common experience shared with the respondents. As a result, interviews were a form of peer interviewing based on joint experiences (Adler, 2003; Platt, 1981). The strength of this technique lies in the building of rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. But a downside can mean that there exists a false bias (Platt, 1981). It was also essential to ensure that familiarity with the topic did not result in the narrowness of evidence because shared knowledge did not require the interviewee to elaborate on some points (Platt, 1981). To counter this, respondents were asked to expand upon some responses even though the researcher had the knowledge of what the interviewee meant.

A number of the respondents were more guarded with their responses than others, with three politicians, one journalist and the animal activist asking for the interviewer to stop the recording and for comments made to be "off the record".¹² This evidence was not included in the transcript that was later analysed for this study. Requesting that comments be "off the record" could be a sign that there was

¹² Coalition politician A; Journalist B; Wade, F. (Interviewer), Animal activist A (Interviewee) (2016, July 25); Wade, F. (Interviewer), Labor Politician A (Interviewee) (2016, December 8).

still concern over the politically sensitive subject matter and how their responses would be interpreted and judged by the researcher and by future readers. Even though some interviewees were happy to be identified, anonymity was given to all respondents for consistency. The most common rationale for anonymity is when the case study is on a controversial subject (Yin, 2009, p 197). In the example of the live export of cattle to Indonesia, the subject incited strong emotions and evoked heated public debate, thus a reason for requesting names to be suppressed. Anonymity was agreed to by the interviewer in the hope that the respondents would become comfortable and talk in detail. As determined in a study conducted by Ong and Weiss (2006), anonymity is found to encourage more revelations. Therefore, to avail the deconstruction of data, it was necessary to allocate coded names to the interviewees as per the ethics requirements of the University (Appendix A, B & C).

Interviews conducted resulted in 13 ½ hours of digital recordings which were transcribed in full by the researcher, requiring approximately four hours of transcription per hour of interview. Due to the need to keep all participants anonymous, any identifiable information was removed from the transcript. As noted in Bryman,

whilst it is an arduous and very time-consuming task, it offered great benefits in terms of bringing me closer to the data, and encouraging me to start to identify key themes, and to become aware of the similarities and differences between different participants' accounts (2008, p. 456).

During the interviews a notebook was also kept for the documentation of impressions, major pointers, emerging themes, future areas of inquiry and connections to literature. This type of note taking is in the tradition of ethnographic approaches and is a feature of grounded theory research and general inductive qualitative analysis (Wolcott, 2001).

In analysing the interview transcripts firstly, a broad-brush approach was applied combining topical, analytical and descriptive coding. This was a similar approach as employed when deconstructing the newspaper articles as well as the Hansard transcripts. This organised the material into topic areas. Then all related content was gathered, and perceptions, contradictions and assumptions, identified

by the framing of the content, were investigated. The interview transcripts were coded by hand. Code words depicting the prominent message that was emerging in the transcript were written in the margins of the text and comments investigated.

Measurement of data

While recalling that this thesis is primarily a narrative, there still is a requirement that there is a systematic approach to the measurement of the data, particularly regarding the issue of bias. This thesis uses volume of phrases, the most basic and widely used measure of journalistic bias (Watts, Domke, Shah & Fan, 1999), in determining its findings. The study also goes beyond discussion of bias reliant on anecdotal evidence but uses the language of the journalist in the development of the news discourse when analysing the data for this research, as a measurement of bias (Bennett, Rhine & Flickinger, 2001). Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987), point to the use of metaphors in news discourse, as a means of “making things visible and understandable” (p. 336). Particular attention was paid to the descriptors of the program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) within the newspaper articles and these key words can be seen in Figure 26 on page 182 of this thesis. Words included cruel, inhumane, graphic, gory, bloody, shocking, awful, gruesome and brutal.

Chapter summary

By employing the transformative paradigm, “where inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda” (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) and using the case study research approach, an appropriate set of realities has emerged. This chapter also outlines how the evidence was considered and the process through which findings emerged. The following chapter places the trade in context with a brief overview of the history of the live export industry and the place it plays in rural Australia. Chapter Four also introduces the political environment within which the events that occurred to the live export industry in 2011 unfolded and introduces the players in the narrative.

Chapter Four:

Setting the Scene

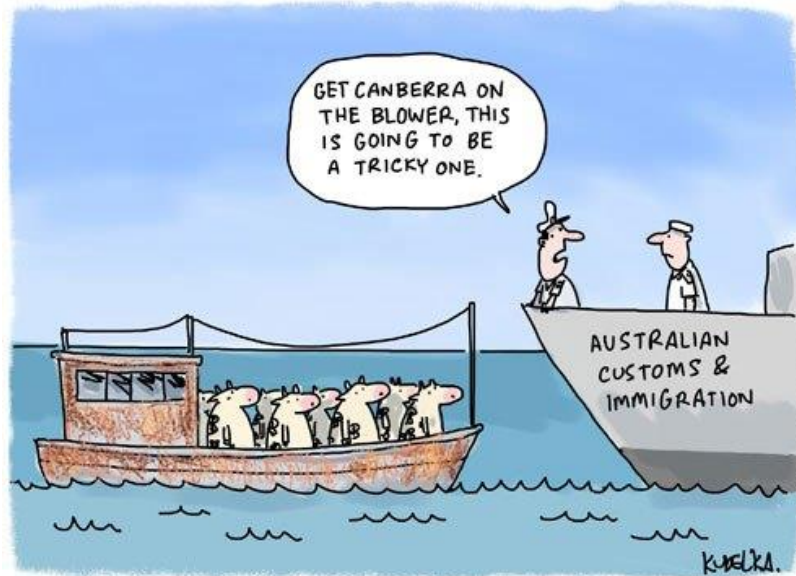


Figure 5: Jon Kudelka, Stop the Cows, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 2011.

The previous chapters discussed the need for a framework for identifying the interplay of influencers shaping live export. This chapter focuses on the previous interventions by advocates and politicians in the live export trade, on whether there has been a deviation from moral standards (Ericson, Baranek & Chen, 1987). Records indicate that Australia has had a profitable live animal export industry since the early 1880s (Austin, 2011a, p. 5). Investment into exporting to Asian markets resulted in the opening of large cattle stations in the Northern Territory, Kimberley and Northern Queensland regions. From its earliest days, it was the intent of the industry to deliver well-conditioned livestock to foreign markets such as Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore and, later, the Philippines.¹³

With trade disrupted by the two World Wars, live animal export became

¹³ Industry spokesperson A.

truly established as a small, steady trade with a solid base in the 1960s, before growing into an industry worth \$1.8 billion a year (Austin, 2011a, p. 26). In parallel with the economic benefits to Australia's trade balance has been the ability for Australia to establish itself as a world leader in delivering livestock to countries throughout Asia and the Middle East. This growth has coincided with the economic expansion in these regions and a rise of the middle classes which has seen an increased demand for meat. Sheep were the number one live export until cattle exports were boosted by purpose-built ships, initially meant for sheep, later modified to be used for cattle. By the 1970s, Australia began to invest heavily in the export of live cattle which included market expansion into Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia and the development of significant infrastructure such as ports. Australia also developed a specific breed of cattle, the droughtmaster, which was deemed more suitable for Northern Australian conditions and the Asian palate. By the early 1980s, Australian cattle were being exported in growing numbers to the Philippines, along with Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei (Austin, 2011a, p. 50) and by 2010, Indonesia had become Australia's largest cattle market, receiving 60 per cent of the live cattle exports and worth \$316 million (Farmer, 2011, p. 14).

Concerns over animal welfare have occurred in parallel to the trade, with continuing and significant public unease being raised in the media and with government policy makers. Subsequently, there have been at least 10 federal government and parliamentary reviews into the trade since 1985.¹⁴ Industry spokesperson A said he believed that the previous reviews into the trade had led to significant improvements in animal welfare, saying:

Regulatory reforms determined in all the various reviews meant that the industry had to make changes, and this was for the better. It helped us, too, with the less stressed the animal, the better the product which went a long way to helping our reputation of providing a good quality product.¹⁵

An increase in trade in the seventies brought with it an increase in concern over the

¹⁴ Industry spokesperson A.

¹⁵ Industry spokesperson A.

welfare of the animals transported. This timing coincided with a noticeable global rise in advocating for the rights of animals and the formation of a movement spearheaded by the publication of Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975), in which he wrote of the shared capacity of both humans and animals to suffer, inferring that animals have interests that need protecting. Some 30 years after this seminal work, Singer wrote of animal advocacy in the *New York Review of Books* saying:

The most obvious difference between the current debate [2003] over the moral status of animals and that of thirty years ago is that in the early 1970s, to an extent barely credible today, scarcely anyone thought that the treatment of individual animals raised an ethical issue worth taking seriously. There were no animal rights or animal liberation organizations ... Today the situation is very different. Issues about our treatment of animals are often in the news. Animal rights organizations are active in all the industrialized nations. The US animal rights group called People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has 750,000 members and supporters (Singer, 2003).

Animal welfare, contrary to animal rights which includes the abolition of all human use of animals (Sunstein & Nussbaum, 2004), promotes the right of an animal to be protected from inhumane treatment. It provides the underlining philosophy of the RSPCA, which states on its website that: "The RSPCA is not opposed to the farming of animals for food ... our objective is to ensure animals in agriculture are treated humanely from birth to slaughter" (Agriculture in Australia – our role, 2014). Nor indeed does Animals Australia, co-founded in 1980 by Singer, whose expressed aim is to:

Investigate, expose and raise community awareness of animal cruelty; provide animals with the strongest representation possible to Government and other decision makers; educate, inspire, empower and enlist the support of the community to prevent and prohibit animal cruelty and to strengthen the animal protection movement (Animals Australia, 2017).

The animal welfare movement

There appears a common contention in the social movement literature that protest movements are usually more dependent on the media than the media are on the protest movement (Gamson & Wolsfeld, 1993). Van Zoonen (1996) went so far as to say that social movements and the mass media engage in “a dance of death” and media are the dominant partner. Social movement organisations have a profound effect on media discourse by defining and framing their grievances to attract media attention and indeed social movement scholars have observed how animal images convey a range of responses such as “the suffering of the innocents” thus intending to generate a moral shock. This study further investigates how the animal welfare movement used the media to recruit an audience.

Concern for the welfare of animals has been growing steadily throughout the Western world, particularly since the illustrated publication of Peter Singer's book, *Animal Liberation* (1975). An Australian Research Council-funded study into the changing nature of human-animal relations found that 55 per cent of Australians believed that “animals should have the same moral rights as human beings” (Franklin, 2006). A survey conducted by Essential Media Communications (Chen, 2016, p. 280) found that only 30 per cent of respondents agreed with a similarly worded statement, “animals deserve the same rights as people to be free from harm and exploitation”; while 61 per cent agreed with the statement “animals deserve some protection from harm and exploitation, but it is still appropriate to use them for the benefit of humans”. There is also a growing desire for consumers to know where their food is coming from and that it is being farmed and produced ethically. This is reflected in mainstream marketing campaigns, an example of which is the branding of some meat products in Coles supermarkets as “grass fed”. But it could be argued that Australia is affluent enough to have such morals and take such an ethical approach, whereas other countries such as those in the developing world do not have that luxury. However, the RSPCA's Goodfellow, Tensen and Bradshaw (2014) wrote:

As economic prosperity rises, public concern for the welfare of animals increases ... Animals, including livestock, are increasingly being viewed less

in instrumental terms for their material value to human beings and more as sentient beings with *intrinsic* value.

The degree of public and media attention generated by recent controversies concerning the mistreatment of Australian livestock (both domestically and abroad) has confirmed that animal welfare is a serious national political issue.

No major livestock industry has escaped public scrutiny over an animal welfare related matter within the past three years. Whether such scrutiny derives from the actions of animal activists, animal welfare organisations, food retailers, government regulators, or the media, it can have significant impacts for livestock industries and create uncertain business environments (2014, p. 16).

The events that occurred to the live export industry following the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) illustrate the vulnerability of the trade and provide a useful example of just how an entire industry and Australian brand can be threatened by a change in government policy.

It would be misleading for this thesis to suggest that the aim of the animal advocates that were protesting against the live export of cattle to Indonesia was to stop meat consumption. Instead, the ultimate goal for animal advocates and their supporters both in parliament and in the public arena is the cessation of all live export in favour of boxed meat, slaughtered in Australia with abattoirs adhering to state animal cruelty laws.¹⁶ Failing that, in both newspaper articles and parliamentary debate there was a push for an assurance that policy would require all abattoirs to stun the animal prior to slaughter (“Plan limits live cattle to stun gun abattoirs”, 2011; Siewart, 2011).

Animal welfare aside, there was another group agitating for the demise of the live cattle industry. The Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union’s (AMIEU) had a desire to increase the boxed beef export market at the forefront of its agenda. With their coinciding objectives, it is no surprise that an alliance between the AMIEU and the animal activists was born, one that had existed since the 1980s.

¹⁶ Animal activist A; Independent politician A; Journalist B; Labor politician A; Wade, F. (Interviewer), Journalist C (Interviewee) (2016, February 4).

In the lead-up to events of 2011, the AMIEU ran the Live Export, Exports Jobs campaign the previous year (2010), directly placing the processing sector at odds with the live export industry, following the loss of 200 jobs in Queensland and another 300 in southwest New South Wales after abattoir closures. Talking in a podcast on the AMIEU website, an abattoir worker is filmed saying: “It is live export that is killing us ...They [the government] have to know that” (AMIEU, 2010). Interestingly, this research suggests that 2011 was the first time that the relationship was overtly obvious in the mainstream media, with union heads being pictured alongside the animal activists and the left-wing lobby group GetUP! during press conferences at Parliament House the day after the *Four Corners* program aired. According to the rural press gallery reporter interviewed for this research and identified as Journalist A, the alliance was more than just symbolic. He said, “I believe that the union bankrolled the campaign,”¹⁷ a view that was repeated by all Coalition politicians interviewed for this project.¹⁸

The law of the trade

It is prudent to understand where legislation governing the live export trade sits within Australia’s multilayers of government. As outlined in Chapter One, unlike animal protection laws which fall under state jurisdiction, live export rests with the federal government which, under the Constitution, is responsible for trade and commerce with other countries. Legislation relating to the live export industry is primarily aimed at maintaining market access for the trade, ensuring that the importing country’s requirements are satisfied. While exporters must comply with the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Acts* applicable to each of the jurisdictions in which they operate, there is no specific federal legislation that relates to animal welfare. According to the federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources’ website:

... the red meat industry has primary responsibilities for its own affairs and strategic future direction, with the federal government providing funding in

¹⁷ Journalist A.

¹⁸ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C.

the areas of research and development; the collection and dispersing of levies and the facilitation of the management of “issues of national importance” (Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, 2016).

The *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997* sets the regulations under which the trade exists. Several stakeholder organisations are signatories to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (see Appendix I) and include Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), Cattle Council of Australia (CCA), Australian Livestock Export Corporation (Livecorp) and Australian Livestock Exporters’ Council (ALEC). Another important player for industry is the National Farmers Federation (NFF), which advocates to federal government on behalf of all the previously mentioned organisations. This study finds that the NFF, once a formidable force in agriculture advocacy with strong links into the National Party of Australia (the Nationals), in 2011 had lost some of its status in Canberra, with little reference to the organisation within the media or in parliamentary debate. This could be due to the splintering of the various commodity groups who believed that they had a better chance for favourable outcomes from government if lobbying separately, the reverse of which this research paper finds is applicable to successful advocacy. According to Industry spokesperson B, a Northern Territory cattle producer, who often met with the Minister for Agriculture, Hon Senator Joe Ludwig: “The Minister said to me that he didn’t understand why he had to have five meetings with five different red meat organisations. Certainly, [it] didn’t endear us to the government.”¹⁹

Self-regulation of the live export industry had, until 2011, been the preference of both government and industry, with both believing that the recommendations adopted following the *Keniry Review* were adequate (2003), supported by comments made by the Western Australian Senator referred to in this study as Coalition politician A, and Industry spokesperson B from the Northern Territory.²⁰ But according to Industry spokesperson A, who was a feedlot owner, cattle producer and state National Party MP, some exporters were resisting change

¹⁹Industry spokesperson B.

²⁰ Coalition politician A; Industry spokesperson B.

saying, “For exporters, this [improvement] was about an added cost that they found hard to justify. And some [exporters] were just cowboys.”²¹This sentiment was supported by Industry spokesperson B who claimed:

They [the exporters] just didn’t want to spend any more money than they had to. Their aim was to get the animals over there and grab the money. Any improvement to welfare standards was happening slowly if at all.²²

Industry demonstrated self-regulation when they suspended cattle shipments to three abattoirs featured in a sample of footage taken by Animal Australia’s Lyn White and shown to industry just prior to the *Four Corners* program was aired (Ferguson, 2011; Gray, 2011a). There was minimal media coverage of the industry’s response; however, this thesis suggests this initial interaction between the activists and the industry was nothing more than a teaser initiated by the activists. Evidence within this research shows that due to the horrific nature of the images that were to follow, self-regulation of the live cattle industry was never going to be enough to silence the critics.

Live export on camera

There is ample evidence available in the public domain of footage showing poor animal welfare practices, taken by activists and often in secret. By using still images or videos, animal activists have been able to infiltrate homes across the country, bringing an issue that was the concern of a fringe minority into the spotlight. The first major event occurred in August 2003 when over 5000 sheep died aboard the *MV Cormo Express*. Denied entry into Saudi Arabia due to disease, sheep were forced to spend two months aboard the ship while efforts to offload were being made. This incident provided not only the community but also the live export industry and politicians with their first real insight into the reputational risks inherent in transporting animals by sea with an actively participating audience.

Media coverage of the events in 2003 was significant and there was evidence of cooperation between animal advocates and news organisations. This

²¹ Industry spokesperson A.

²² Industry spokesperson B.

study interviewed a Victorian Labor backbencher and prominent anti-live export campaigner, referred to as Labor politician B, in this study, who said:

60 Minutes was in on this one [*Cormo*] ... I think it was the first time that they had paired up with the animal activists.

At one stage, when the Government refused to say where the ship was it was the media that found it near Dubai. The Minister came down hard on the media then - said that publicity doesn't help the hunt for a country to take them.

Trussie [Minister for Agriculture Warren Truss MP] even went so far as saying that there was unsympathetic reporting of the issues ... and I quote [referring to notes],

“For commentators, reporters or animal liberation activists to paint the situation in any way that is likely to undermine the confidence of potential buyers is not helpful to the welfare of the sheep.”

He [Warren Truss MP] was pretty mad that Animals Australia and *60 Minutes* alerted the public to the fact that sheep were suffocating on board the *Cormo Express* due to the conditions on-board.²³

Industry spokesperson B likened the impact of the *Cormo Express* on the Australian live trade to what a crash does to the airline industry saying: “What you didn’t want was that discussion over the merits of the live trade dragging on for 20 years, which has a negative impact on our ability to be seen as reliable suppliers [of meat].”²⁴ In such a scenario, the media and journalists acted as “knowledge linkers” by “reformulating, recirculating and reordering knowledge” (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987 p.16).

The response by the Howard government in 2003 was swift and they suspended all shipments to Saudi Arabia, announced the *Keniry Review* into the livestock export industry and set aside \$11.3 million over four years to implement

²³ Labor politician B.

²⁴ Industry spokesperson B.

the recommendations of the Review in the 2004-2005 federal budget (Keniry, 2003). But to some, like cartoonist Ron Tandberg, animal welfare was an issue with clear voter implications, as suggested in his cartoon printed in *The Age* shown below.

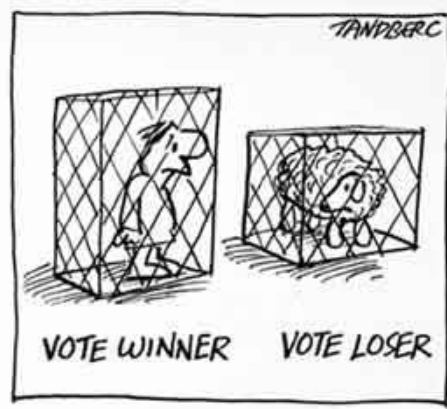


Figure 6: Ron Tandberg, 'Vote Winner', *The Age*, 25 September 2003

While 2003 may have been the first time that *60 Minutes* worked with Animals Australia, it certainly wasn't the last. On Sunday 23 February 2006 at 7.30pm, *60 Minutes* broadcasted a program that included covert footage showing mistreatment of Australian cattle in an Egyptian abattoir. The program showed the gauging of eyes and severe mistreatment of cattle. The Coalition government, once again under Prime Minister Howard, immediately banned the trade to Egypt for some two years (Chen, 2016, p. 273). The then Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran, a National MP from Victoria, said in the *60 Minutes* program that the vision was: "Gut wrenching. You won't see worse examples of animal cruelty than that" (Carleton, 2006).

One of the biggest claims by animal activists in 2003, 2006 and again in 2011, is that government is failing in their responsibilities and being aware of the mistreatment makes them complicit. The transcript of the *60 Minutes* program verifies this in the following quote:

RICHARD CARLETON: You're responsible?

PETER MCGAURAN: No.

RICHARD CARLETON: Yes.

PETER MCGAURAN: How so?

RICHARD CARLETON: Because you were told about this at least three years ago. You set about doing something about it, which was quite futile. You've got men in the Middle East who know this is going on. They answer to you (Carlton, 2006).

According to animal activists, action against perpetrators of mistreatment only occurs when the media alerts the public to the issue and given the evidence, this is hard to refute. RSPCA spokesperson Melina Tensen is on record as saying, “the federal government need to do more to monitor it [live export] so animal welfare groups are not left to uncover and report abuses” (Bardon, 2008). Animal activist A, who in 2011 was working as a policy officer for a major animal welfare organisation, said:

Given what has happened in the past, it's hard for us [the animal welfare movement] not to think that the only way things are done is if the mainstream media make it a story and 2006 was a perfect example. It is their [the government] method of operation. Don't do anything until you have too. Just happens time and time again.²⁵

On 2 December 2010, ABC's *7.30 Report* showed footage showing Australian sheep in Kuwait being mistreated and thrown into car boots and, instead of intervening, the Labor government and Ludwig left it up to the industry to find a solution. In hindsight, this apparent inaction by the government could be considered a trigger for events that unfolded less than six months later. Animal activists were outraged at the lack of action by government but failed to gather enough momentum through either the media or within political circles.

According to Animal activist A:

I think it was bad timing. Parliament wasn't sitting, it was near Christmas and if I'm being honest, seeing a few sheep thrown into car boots, albeit badly, wasn't gruesome enough. What we learnt from that was that we didn't have to give the government a chance to act before we went public with footage

²⁵ Animal activist A.

because they weren't going to anyway. We were misguided in thinking that Labor would be more amenable. Even though Labor were more likely to be sympathetic to our cause, they were still political and for a moment we lost our political edge. We were going keen not to let that happen again.²⁶

2003 and 2006: What was different?

If 2011 was not the first time that the animal activists and the anti-live export campaigners had used the media to change government policy over the shipment of live animals from Australia, why was 2011 such a watershed moment for the trade? One farmer (in conversation, Perth, 10 November 2012) said that the public cared less about the *Cormo Express* because the livestock were sheep ... commonly referred to as, "maggots on legs" and did not resonate with the public in the same way as cattle. However, all 17 respondents in this study mentioned social media being a mitigating factor behind the surge of community outrage to the events of 2011. This study finds that the success of the campaign to stop live export did not hinge on the role of social media, as we know it today (2018), given the lack of social media usage by the industry and politicians in 2011. Instead, this study finds that the email campaign orchestrated by GETUP!, the RSPCA and Animals Australia and targeting politicians was unlike anything experienced before. The existence of a successful email campaign staged by the activists, has been misrepresented in rhetoric as a social media campaign.²⁷ Indicative of this is the comment by Coalition politician A, who said "we didn't have social media in 2003 like in 2011. The email campaign [in 2011] was overwhelming."²⁸

According to statistics acquired by *Socialmedianews.com.au*, in 2011 there were 10,400,000 unique visitors to Facebook, while Twitter usage was continuing to rise with 1,900,000 users (Cowling, 2011) indicating that the use of social media was on the climb. There is no doubt that activists recognised the platform that social

²⁶ Animal activist A.

²⁷ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Independent politician A; Labor politician A.

²⁸ Coalition politician A.

media provided in which to galvanise the masses to action. Mark Textor, the numbers man and campaign adviser behind every significant Coalition win for the past two decades, is quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)* as saying:

... the #4corners was moving so fast that it was difficult to track specific comments in real time; the discussion stream was bombarded with opinion tweets conveying shock and disgust, and uniquely, the sentiment was almost 100 per cent negative” (Textor, 2011).

He also observed that “MLA’s twitter account was dormant” as evidence shows industry and government were a little slower to embrace new technology than the animal advocates. The NFF’s Facebook and Twitter accounts were set up less than six days before the *Four Corners* program aired (Ruth Redfern, in conversation, Canberra, 20 August 2018) when the newly appointed media manager took her role, while the Cattle Council and Sheepmeat Council did not have a social media presence until 2012. While there were some politicians active in the social media arena, there is evidence collected in this study that indicates not all politicians were active users until later in 2012.²⁹ This has been backed by research that found that politicians were largely resistant to conversational social media (MacNamara, 2008, p. 7) and used social media to disseminate and broadcast messages rather than engaging in dialogue (Bussy & Paterson, 2012; Sauter & Bruns, 2013). Therefore, this study finds that while the social media conversation was not reaching industry nor decision makers, activists were using Twitter, emails and online petitions through the web with the activity focused on mobilising a growing informed public into action (Hartley, 2012).³⁰

Quite apart from the involvement of new communication channels, the politics within the governments of 2003 and 2006 were very different from that experienced in 2011. In both 2003 and 2006, the trade suspensions were implemented by the Coalition led by Howard, traditional friends of the rural community via their partnership with the National Party of Australia (the Nationals). Following the 2001 federal election, the Coalition had a comfortable 14 seat

²⁹ Coalition politician C, Coalition politician B; Labor politician A.

³⁰ Animal activist A; Labor politician A.

majority in the parliament, increasing their majority to 24 seats in 2004 (Bennett, Newmann & Korpas, 2005, p. 17) and gaining control of the Senate from 1 July 2005 (p. 35). This was in stark contrast to the parliamentary makeup of 2011, which had a public airing of leadership turmoil and a government reliant upon a handful of independents to remain in power.

Hindsight has drawn criticism for the decisions made by the Howard administration, particularly from members of the Labor party, who believed inaction by the government helped to facilitate the events of 2011. A Western Australian backbencher and prominent anti-live export campaigner (known as Labor politician A in this study) said: “They [the Howard government] just didn’t go far enough. A ban is one thing but making sure the industry cleans up their act could have been done before we got to 2011. Howard missed the boat on that one. The industry hadn’t done really anything to develop the tools government needed to deal with any future incident.”³¹

Labor politician B agreed, saying: “Howard could have stepped in, way back in 2006, and made industry far more accountable. Don’t forget it was the animal activists then as well that put the trade on the agenda. Putting the ban in place was great but Howard could have put stringent and appropriate measures in place. But either couldn’t or wouldn’t.”³² Speaking in an interview for this study, a Queensland Coalition MP, who was on the backbench in 2003 and 2006 and whose electorate relies heavily on cattle production for income, said: “Howard did what he could but knew the value of the relationship with the rural heart landers, and we [the Nationals] weren’t going to let him punish the whole trade for a few who wanted to cut corners.”³³ Political point scoring or not, events that occurred in 2003 and 2006 showed that the industry was far from protected from future criticism by animal welfare advocates (Ergas, 2009).

³¹ Labor politician A.

³² Labor Politician B.

³³ Coalition politician C.

Animals Australia, RSPCA, the ABC and that footage

According to reflections by the chief veterinarian working for the RSPCA (Jones & Davies, 2016), her organisation and Animals Australia were in discussions over the live export trade to Indonesia prior to any footage by Animals Australia being shot. The decision to investigate Indonesian abattoirs followed the release of a report for government into slaughter practices in Indonesia and undertaken by Professor Ivan Caple and handed down to stakeholders in November 2010. While the report did not say that practices were perfect, Caple did claim to have found the standards impressive and the installation of the Mark 1 restraint boxes to be a big improvement on traditional slaughter methods (Jones & Davies, 2016, p. 29). ABC reported that Caple said the conditions of the animals were found to be “generally good” (Ockenden, 2011). Caple’s findings were covered in the rural media and the ABC on both radio and television but overall did not gain significant national media attention across the other mastheads. Animal welfare groups such as the RSPCA released media statements demanding that more be done and criticised the report for being soft on the industry. Animal activist A said: “Caple’s report was the biggest whitewash, rubbish, a joke. To say that stunning was infeasible was simply ridiculous.”³⁴ Meanwhile, the federal government issued a statement in which it said: “while it continues to support the live export trade, it's concerned about any evidence of animal mistreatment ... and will continue to work with industry to improve welfare conditions in other countries” (Ferguson, 2011). This statement sent a strong message that up until late January 2011, government still found the industry was accountable for its failures.

The footage that was obtained by Animals Australia and formed the basis of the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) detailed the slaughter of Australian cattle in Indonesia. Generally Australian households are not privy to the inside workings of an abattoir and even the most hardened farmer can find the slaughter

³⁴ Animal activist A.

of animals distasteful and unpleasant.³⁵ To make the slaughter houses more acceptable to Australian and first world standards, MLA developed the Mark 1 box, 103 of which were sent to Indonesian abattoirs and paid for by Australian taxpayers. The Australian sourced cattle, usually brahman or droughtmaster, were known to be larger and more aggressive than other breeds and had previously caused some problems for the Indonesian slaughterhouse workers due to the animal's size in comparison to the small framed Indonesians. The Mark 1 restraint box was specifically developed to mitigate any safety problems and contain the animal so that the kill could be clean (Schip, 2011).

Stunning prior to slaughter is often raised by activists and politicians alike (Rout, 2011a; White, 2011) as a humane way to facilitate slaughter. While deemed best practice, stunning is not necessary in accordance with international standards as determined by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), that sits within the WTO and recognises practices of meat preparation by some religions (notably Kosher and Halal). Meanwhile it is important to note, that while Australia encourages stunning, not all Australian abattoirs stun before slaughter.³⁶ It has been suggested that prior to the events that occurred in 2011, only a small number of abattoirs in Indonesia used stunning although the figures are arbitrary.³⁷ According to Industry spokesperson B who travelled regularly to Indonesia: "I can tell you that there was no stunning prior to 2011, or maybe the odd abattoir but I could count them on one hand."³⁸

It is apparent by the evidence obtained via the animal activist interviewed for this research as well as considering previous actions from anti-live export campaigners that the events that unfolded in 2011 had been building for some time. However, it appears that the release of the Caple Report in late 2010 that triggered the RSPCA into action, believing that the government had no intention of making changes to the trade, thus allowing industry to continue to self-regulate

³⁵ Industry spokesperson B.

³⁶ Animal activist A; Coalition politician A, Coalition politician B; Industry spokesperson B.

³⁷ Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B.

³⁸ Industry spokesperson B.

(Jones & Davies, 2016). After the release of the Caple report (2010), the RSPCA and Animals Australia joined ranks with Lyn White, a former South Australian policewoman turned animal activist working for Animals Australia, traveling to Indonesia to gather vision of slaughterhouse practices. The collaboration between the two animal welfare organisations is a strange marriage with Animals Australia being considered more militant than the RSPCA, using covert filming techniques to expose abuse. According to Coalition politician A:

There was no way that the RSPCA could do this [stop the trade] on its own. It needed the shock value that Animals Australia could achieve by obtaining the footage. We had seen that before [with Animals Australia]. RSPCA – up until that point – was perhaps seen as the cake stall brigade. This [partnership with Animals Australia] completely changed the stakes.³⁹

According to anecdotal evidence heard in the process of researching this case study, White and her filming partner from a company called Tracks Investigations filmed openly and were not challenged on the killing floor of the abattoir. The Public Relations (PR) consultant employed by the industry and who had previously worked on Coalition election campaigns, was interviewed for this study. He questioned the authenticity of the footage and whether it was feasible for a blonde Australian woman to gain access to the abattoirs and film openly without being challenged especially as it is documented within Jones and Davies (2016) that White had never been to Indonesia before.⁴⁰ White did not have in-country contacts and did not speak the language. If her version is to be believed, White and her colleague travelled around Jakarta in a taxi and found the abattoirs with help from locals. Interestingly, the ABC did not give credit to Track Investigations for the footage that they used in their package, instead giving full credit to White.

In the *Tracks Investigations, Annual Review 2011-12* and on their website, the UK-based company claim responsibility for the footage shown on ABC TV. They boasted that their “most successful investigation in our history supported Animals Australia’s campaign to end live exports from Australia ... some 40,000 media

³⁹ Coalition politician A.

⁴⁰ PR consultant.

stories followed, sparking massive public opposition to the live export trade and awakening the consciences of a nation to the plight of animals” (Tracks Investigations, 2018).



Figure 7: Lyn White in an Indonesian abattoir (pic: Tracks Investigations, 2018)

Images on the Tracks Investigation website and reproduced above, clearly show Lyn White holding a handycam and openly taking vision on the killing floor. While this research paper is not a piece of investigative journalism, questions that surround the source of the footage are of some interest to the debate within this research; specifically, what lengths activists will go to create policy change?

Upon White’s return, she and the RSPCA worked together to find the right vehicle to turn the raw footage into a marketable mainstream product that would air on free to air television. Firstly, the raw footage was offered to *60 Minutes*, who turned it down because Channel 9 deemed the footage too gruesome and the story too intense for a commercial station. Animal activist A said: “Their [Channel 9] response was pretty clear. This was not footage that was going to get them ratings”⁴¹. This belief was validated by the poor ratings that the ABC received when the *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” went to air, but unlike a commercial station, the ABC is not as beholden to ratings to ensure advertising revenue.

In truth, the ABC is the only media outlet that had the capacity to carry such a story in the depth that was required, and which could risk running the imagery

⁴¹ Animal activist A.

that was required to ensure that the program made an impact. *Four Corners* is and remains the only current affairs program that airs a single story for 40 minutes (which equates to one commercial hour). This provides time to develop the story and to fashion an agenda within the narrative. Since it started airing in August 1961, *Four Corners* has been:

exposing scandals, triggering inquiries, firing debate, confronting taboos and interpreting fads, trends and sub-cultures. Its consistently high standards of journalism and filmmaking have earned international recognition and an array of Walkleys, Logies and other national awards” (Neighbour, 2012, p. 2).

Neighbour, herself a former *Four Corners* reporter, says that the philosophy of the program is to “invest time and resources identifying and investigating issues of significance to Australia and fashioning the end results into a coherent, informative 45-minute television narrative” (2012, p. 3). The programs produced by the *Four Corners* reporters are known for their depth of research, secrecy and ability in making a statement. But this study challenges the premise that the *Four Corners* program on live export was a work of investigative journalism but was instead an example of advocacy journalism. According to Careless (2000, p. 6), advocacy journalism: “openly speaks for or pleads on behalf of another, giving the other a face and a voice”. This provides an indication of the extent that media operatives are used to secure government support or desired policy change.

The decision to give the footage to the media and bypass the government was calculated. Speaking to *The Land*, White said:

The reason why we didn’t take the footage directly to the Minister was because we did that with footage from Kuwait in November [2010] of sheep being brutalised there and unfortunately the Minister’s action on that was completely unacceptable ... He put it back into the hands of industry who have been sending sheep into Kuwait for 30 years, so we had no choice but to make sure that what was going on in Indonesia was publicly exposed to allow the Australian people to have their say (Bettles, 2011a).

According to the RSPCA, previous responses by government were forcing them into a corner and this was not what they were expecting from a Labor government, who

they thought would be more receptive to their arguments for banning the trade. This was due to the animal activists having an established support base already on Labor's backbench in the form of Melissa Parke, Kelvin Thompson, Jill Hall and others and were confident of growing their numbers. They also had the Greens on side, who had entered into an alliance with Labor to form government after the 2010 election, with Animal activist A saying:

If we were going to see a stop to the trade, we thought that it was only going to happen under Labor. We had people on the ag. committee [backbench agricultural policy committee] that knew live export had a use-by-date. We knew we had support in the independents, the Greens, and we had the unions behind us. It was going to be now or never.⁴²

However, the animal activists may have been misguided in thinking that Labor would act to stop the trade. Given Ludwig's lack of action in late 2010, his visit to Indonesia just prior to the airing of the *Four Corners* program where he failed to visit a slaughterhouse as well as his resistance to engage with activists, all serve to indicate that the government saw and indeed appreciated the trade's commercial value. Said the RSPCA on the *Ban Live Export* website:

Footage of further cruel treatment of Australian exported sheep in the Middle East was taken directly to Senator Ludwig in November 2010. He failed to take appropriate action and instead put finding a solution back in the hands of the live exporters. Requests for meetings with the Minister since February this year [2011] have been declined. In April, the Minister was advised about the severity of cruelty witnessed during the investigation in Indonesia, but he has not requested to see the footage or discussed what was observed (RSPCA, 2014).

The animal activists believed, however, that they had another ace up their sleeve in the form of Ludwig's father, Bill Ludwig, former head of the Australian Workers Union (AWU), Labor numbers man in Queensland and one of the "shadowmen" who rolled Rudd. Animal Australia's alliance with the unions swelled the number of activists and, given Labor's natural allegiance to the union movement, offered a

⁴² Animal activist A.

potential for pressure to be placed on the incumbent government in a way that had not manifested previously in a conservative government. According to Coalition politician B who was a former federal Minister for Agriculture, Bill Ludwig did step in, but only to ask the unions to go softer on the Minister, saying: “When the pressure was really on, Bill [Ludwig] called on his pals in the movement to cut Joe [Ludwig] some slack.”⁴³ This involvement by Ludwig’s father was corroborated by Fairfax’s rural reporter in the press gallery, referred to in this study as Journalist A.⁴⁴

Lead-up to “A Bloody Business”

As documented by Jones and Davies (2016), after being approached by Animals Australia and the RSPCA and seeing the footage taken by White (and Tracks Investigations), the ABC’s Sarah Ferguson and producer Michael Doyle travelled to Indonesia to verify the Animals Australia footage supplied. They visited some of the same abattoirs seen by White and several others but were refused entry to the abattoirs that White considered to have the worst practice. The ABC crew also visited the Northern Territory and interviewed industry spokespeople.

The *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business”, which aired at 8:30pm on the evening of 30 May 2011, had been eight weeks in the making. It comprised of footage supplied by Animals Australia, file footage and footage taken by the investigating team from the ABC. This was combined with interviews with industry, veterinarians, animal welfare representatives, the RSPCA and Animals Australia representatives. Its use of footage provided by Animals Australia is an example of media priming (Arendt, 2013; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Moy, Tewksbury & Rinke, 2016) Each step of the program’s production – discovery, research, production – was constructed as parts of a story considered newsworthy by Ferguson’s by her development of the “characters and plot” (Jacobs, 1996, p. 384). The eight-week lead time meant that the program would be aired when parliament was in the midst of the autumn session and in the lead up to winter break, and the cattle trade itself was in a state of readiness for Ramadan. Traditionally this meant that the herd was

⁴³ Coalition politician B.

⁴⁴ Journalist A.

reaching its maximum size for transportation before heading to Indonesian feedlots. Restrictions placed on the trade by the Indonesians meant that should any animals reach over 350Kg, they were deemed to have breached trade guidelines and were unable to be sent to Indonesia.

The RSPCA and Animals Australia had not seen the packaged program prior to its public airing (Jones & Davies, 2016) and had no indication which footage obtained by White was being used and what was not. Ferguson had promised that: “We will do whatever it takes to get as much of this on air as we can” (Jones & Davies, 2016, p. 66). But there is little doubt that the program that aired was better in terms of quality of production and impact than the animal activists could ever have hoped. In the eight weeks between the ABC agreeing to do the program and completion, the animal activists organised their public campaign, with industry hearing rumours that there was footage circulating off the back of several “off record” conversations the activists had with journalists. Animal activist A said: “We met with a few trusted journos – just to give them a heads up. They didn’t need to see the footage – they trusted us when we said that the footage was good. We had that reputation.”⁴⁵ It is clear by considering this evidence that social movements, such as animal welfare, develop media strategies to bypass the media’s selection process (Oliver & Maney, 2000) that can favour institutional sources and political authorities (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, Shoemaker, 1991) and this is an example of priming.

Once *Four Corners* started filming in Indonesia, the program became a badly kept secret, and industry began to realise that they may be in for a tough time. This claim is supported by actions of the then CEO of the Australian Live Exporters Council (ALEC) who contacted and subsequently hired a high-profile public relations (PR) consultant. According to the PR consultant, who is well-known in conservative political circles as a former campaign director for Howard: “There was much to do to offset the damage that the *Four Corners* program could do to the livestock export industry.”⁴⁶ In correspondence between the then CEO of ALEC and the PR

⁴⁵ Animal activist A.

⁴⁶ PR consultant.

consultant and cited for this research, the PR consultant wrote: “Your situation with footage that is likely to be disturbing being provided to the media is unfortunate but with proper planning and management it should ultimately be politically controllable”.⁴⁷ Interestingly, the PR consultant did not see the involvement of the ABC and *Four Corners* in a completely negative light. Instead he believed that there were positives and negatives for the involvement of the program, saying in correspondence that: “On one hand it is a potent program [*Four Corners*] that often sets political and media agendas, thus potentially damaging. On the other they are thorough, thus slow moving which means damaging messages can be sometimes defused.”⁴⁸

It was suggested by the PR consultant that the industry undertake an inoculation campaign to be released before the *Four Corners* program had a chance to air. Such a campaign could consist of expressing concerns and articulating practical solutions to relevant politicians and news channels by:

- Releasing a report discovering inappropriate animal welfare overseas;
- demonstrating concern by the formation of an industry task force;
- developing a five-point plan – with one point to be visible in the short term;
- engage with the RSPCA to refine the plan; give the Minister and broader political briefings; release a media release.⁴⁹

The PR consultant’s suggestion of an inoculation plan is an approach often used in crisis management communications, where crisis is defined as “high consequence, low probability overlaid with risk and uncertainty, conducted under time pressure, disruptive of normal business and potentially lethal to organisational reputation” (Gregory, 2005, p. 313).

It is obvious, when considering the above definition and applying it to an industry that had a history of incidents sparking intense and negative public interest, footage of bad practices appearing in the media is not a “low probability”. Therefore, in purist terms, it can be argued that communication practices aligned to

⁴⁷ PR consultant.

⁴⁸ PR consultant.

⁴⁹ PR consultant.

issues management is what the industry had required for some time. Such complacency in a high-risk industry seems to defy logic. As Coalition politician B, whose electorate was one of the most affected by the ban, said in an interview:

We heard that there was some footage that was going to be on *Four Corners*, but the industry had had footage out in the public domain before and survived. To be honest, I don't think we paid it much attention.⁵⁰

It is this attitude of complacency, rife across the live export industry that was the genesis of the PR consultant view that a crisis management approach was needed. He still says, when interviewed five years later, that had the industry made a more substantial effort with the inoculation plan, the fallout of the footage and the *Four Corners* program could have been mitigated and the ban to the entire trade would have been prevented, saying: "I am sure that the ban to the abattoirs shown on the program would have been put in place no matter what. That was something that had 100 per cent bipartisan support. But the entire trade?"⁵¹

The strategy behind the pre-emptive strike was focused on watering down the attack, not stopping it. In a nutshell, the industry could have been seen to have recognised and dealt with the issue, therefore, where is the news? With the benefit of hindsight, had the industry followed the PR consultant's advice they would have been in a stronger position to ward off attacks from other animal activists by being able to claim that industry was working alongside the most credible animal welfare organisation. Had the industry approached another television outlet with a story looking at the work being done to stamp out poor practice within the industry, then the *Four Corners* program may have looked like it was being both sensationalist and behind the times. There was no doubt that due to the existence of the footage, denial was useless. According to the PR consultant: "the public and thus politicians wanted to look for a villain and it was important that that villain was not the industry".⁵²

⁵⁰ Coalition politician B.

⁵¹ PR consultant.

⁵² PR consultant.

The leading agricultural journalist in the press gallery, referenced in this research as Journalist A, said:

One thing that now bothers me more than anything is that no one from industry reached out to me to tell their story. Because I think it was a no-brainer in terms of an easy win for them – getting their message out for when the shit hit the fan. They had a sort of siege mentality.⁵³

It certainly would seem that industry exhibited poor judgement by not using the leading agricultural journalist working in the gallery as a mouthpiece when combating the storm of negative media attention. He said:

It would have been nice to have been made aware of their response because they would have been facing a tidal wave the next day by the media and none of them favourable. They would have been under attack.⁵⁴

In the above quote, it is intimated that the rural journalist could have used his bias as a supporter of live export in prosecuting the case for the industry, which would have been reflected in the framing of the content (Gitlin, 1980; Entman 1993).

What appears evident in the research is that both the animal welfare movement, industry and government all wanted to regulate the flow of information (Lewin, 1947) and courted individual journalists to progress each of their separate agendas.

The claims that the ABC had an agenda and a predetermined outcome, as stated by some of the respondents interviewed for this research, will be further discussed in Chapter Five. But it is hard to refute claims of bias when the vision was given to industry only days before the program went to air, and then only partial snippets. As stated by Journalist A:

Because the program had a pre-determined outcome, they only showed the industry the actual footage right at the end. And they chose the industry spokesperson they wanted to speak to. Sarah Ferguson is very guarded about how she goes constructing the narrative in terms of who they want to talk to.⁵⁵

⁵³ Journalist A.

⁵⁴ Journalist A.

⁵⁵ Journalist A.

Claims of Ferguson interjecting in interviews with industry spokespersons and a discrepancy in the amount of airtime given to supporters of the trade versus opponents also adds credibility to the argument that the program was biased. Industry spokesperson B said: “Why wouldn’t they give industry an opportunity to respond? Because it didn’t suit their agenda.”⁵⁶ It is also claimed by industry that Ferguson concealed the true intent of the program from cattle producers, did not disclose who she was going to interview and include in the program and did not tell industry that footage obtained by Animals Australia was being used in the final program.⁵⁷ According to a Journalist A: “No one in the bush trusts her [Ferguson]. The *Four Corners* brand suffered a lot of damage because of this and the way she went about her interview.”⁵⁸

As the date of broadcast grew closer, questions were raised in Senate Estimates⁵⁹ and MLA wrote to the Indonesian abattoirs warning them that a program on TV was to be shown, which would put pressure on the government to stop the trade.⁶⁰ Newspapers were beginning to put animal welfare on the public agenda again. One week before the program went to air, WA Coalition senator and former veterinarian and interviewee for this research was informed about the footage and given a verbal rundown of what to expect by the RSPCA. He in turn wrote to everyone in the Coalition party room, warning them about the program and gave background on the worth of the industry particularly its economic benefits. Coalition politician A said:

I pointed out there existed challenges in the trade: gathering them in feedlots; the truck transport, the shipboard transport and holding of stock the other end and meat processing. I gave a perspective of the live export trade; that we have met challenges but that there were still significant challenges ahead.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Industry spokesperson B.

⁵⁷ Industry spokesperson A.

⁵⁸ Journalist A.

⁵⁹ Coalition politician A.

⁶⁰ Industry spokesperson B.

⁶¹ Coalition politician C.

With the storm clouds circulating and his advisers becoming increasingly uneasy, Ludwig requested a copy of the footage taken by Animals Australia the night before *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) went to air. According to Parliamentary media adviser A, who was working for a Cabinet Minister at the time, there was preparation work being done, but not crisis management. She said: “We [the government] had an expectation that the show would be bad, but that industry would take the fight on. There was no panic.”⁶²

Chapter summary

This chapter serves to introduce the live export trade and places it in context by looking at prior attempts by Animals Australia and other animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA, to ban the export of live animals for slaughter. It raises potential errors of judgement by previous governments who may have banned the trade to particular markets but were criticised for not doing enough to ensure that industry was more tightly regulated. This chapter clearly outlines mistakes made by industry, with its lack of crisis management and lack of engagement with animal welfare organisations, while raising the issue of journalistic bias and the close relationship that was developing between the activists and the ABC. This chapter also mentioned how industry felt maligned by the ABC, having not been given equal airtime as the activists on camera to express their views, with the industry becoming the marginalised

This chapter shows how journalists employ news values (Harcup, 2004; Harcup & O’Neill 2001, 2017) to help to set the agenda and choose what they report. Their role as central agents in the public’s reaction to deviance is being exposed, and how they report on what they see are the most significant problems of deviance (Ericson, Baranek & Chen, 1987).

By handing the Animals Australia footage straight to the media and bypassing government and industry, the activists’ agenda was plainly and clearly

⁶² Wade, F. (Interviewer), Parliamentary media adviser A (Interviewee) (2016, March 11).

spelt out in this chapter. Their actions illustrate that there was a social construction of the news by the activists. By priming the ABC, the activists are growing in influence and the issue, once fringe, has found the trigger that will move onto the mainstream public and political agenda. The next chapter will discuss the events that occurred post 30 May 2011 and explore the evidence collated for this thesis to arrive at findings that will advance professional practice for those who shape policy decisions.

Chapter Five:

Evidence and observations – the first week



Figure 8: Jon Kudelka, 'See if you can swing some sort of deal where we send Indonesia one cow and they send us five back as steak ...', *The Australian*, 2011

This chapter documents the reaction of newspapers, advocates and industry to the public screening of *Four Corners*, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011) and in doing so illustrates a clear narrative that goes to answer the research question of who can influence federal government policy. The chapter considers the emerging themes in the newspaper articles and cross references these with evidence collated in interviews undertaken for this research project and demonstrates how the narrative evolved throughout a period of intense public scrutiny. The journalist can be observed mainly acting as a gatekeeper (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015) as they visualise deviance (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987) as evident by the visual framing (Geise, 2017).

As indicated in the previous chapter, a content analysis of newspaper articles was undertaken, with a research sample of 651 articles from 14 national mastheads.

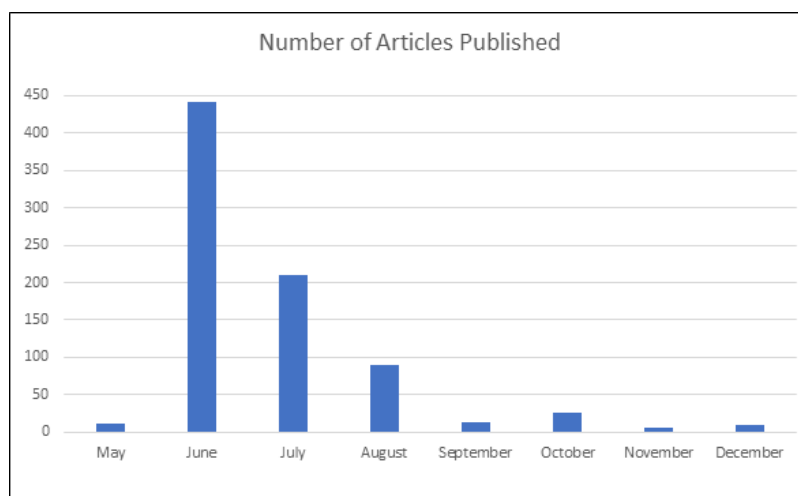


Figure 9: Number of articles published on export of live cattle to Indonesia by month

Evident in Figure 9 above, there was a spike in the number of articles in the months of June and July 2011. This coincided with major live export policy decisions including the initial response of the government following the airing of the ABC program, the ban of the trade to Indonesia and the resumption of the trade into Indonesia.

Figure 10 on the following page of this thesis, illustrates the most prolific of the journalists located in the press gallery and writing on live export during the months of June – July 2011, with Figure 13 illustrating the mastheads. While the most prolific of the newspaper articles were written by Canberra press gallery journalists, there were two exceptions that should be noted, News Limited’s Peter Alford and Fairfax’s Tom Allard, who were based out of Jakarta. It was found that both journalists, while writing under their own byline, often shared a byline with a Canberra - based journalist, thus indicating that the editor had merged two sources of content and clearly constructing copy and operating as gatekeepers (DeFleur,2010; Lewin,1947; McQuail, 1992).

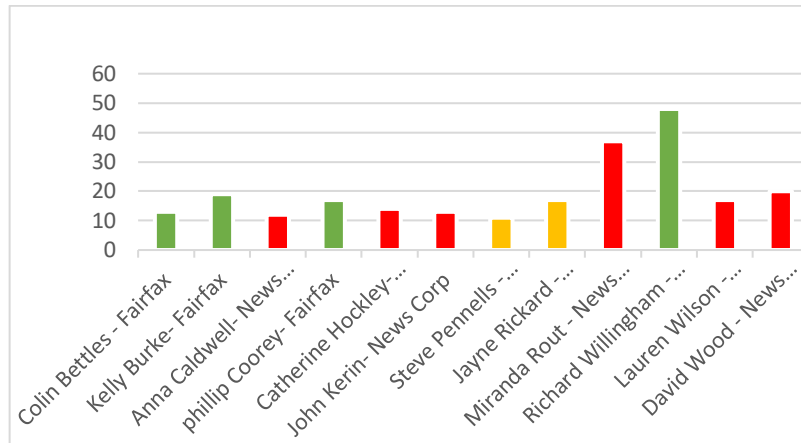


Figure 10: Listings of most prolific journalists located in the press gallery and reporting on live export during June-July 2011

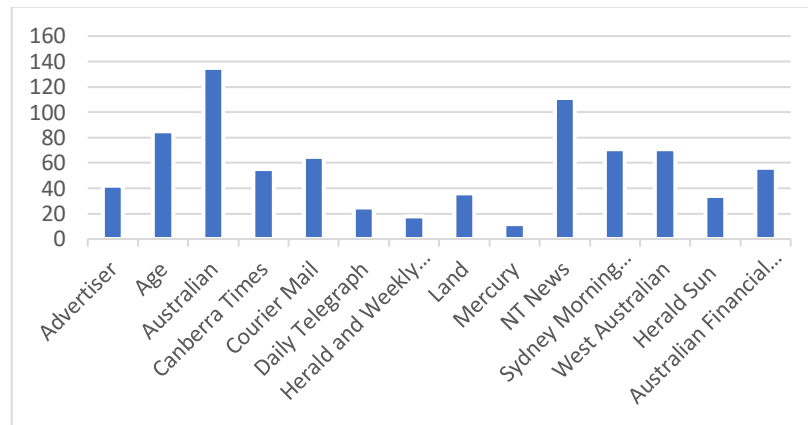


Figure 11: Articles published in June and July of 2011 on live export by masthead

Evidence suggests that 67% of the articles were written by press gallery journalists (Appendix E) during the period June – July 2011 as demonstrated by Figure 12 below.

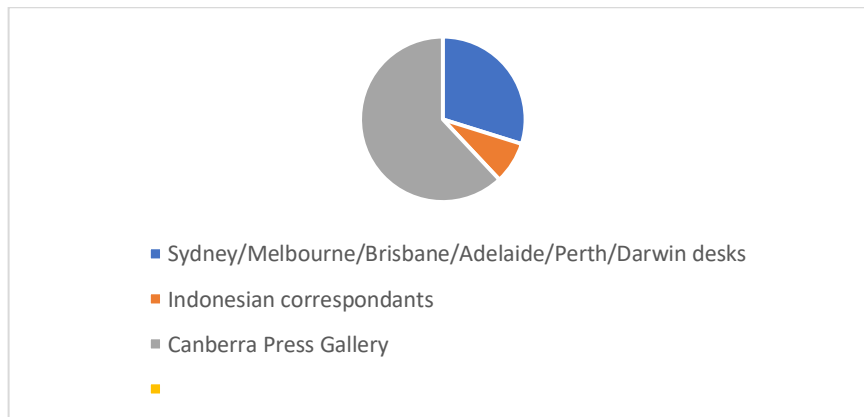


Figure 12: Location of journalists.

The themes that emerged from the content analysis coding were then triangulated with the transcripts of 17 interviews with respondents and with 83 speeches about live export made across both the House of Representatives and the Senate). The speeches chosen represented opportunities where the member or Senator debated the issue in some detail and included Question Time as depicted in Figure 13 and Figure 14 below.

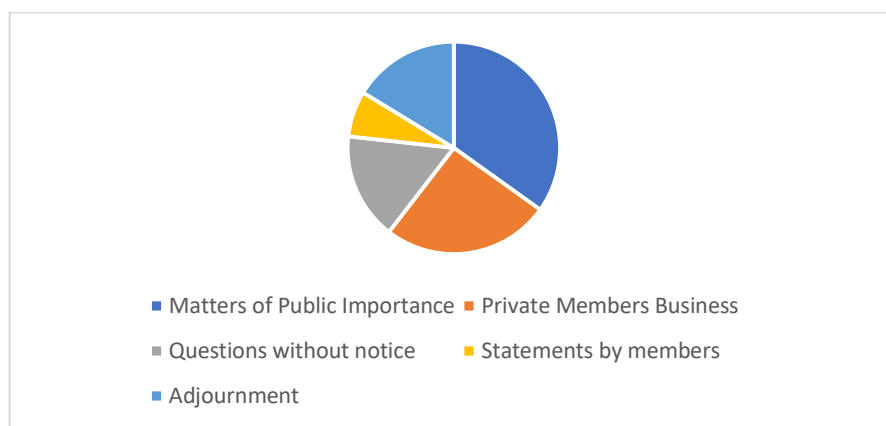


Figure 13: Speeches made in the House of Representatives referring to live export and used in the study sample

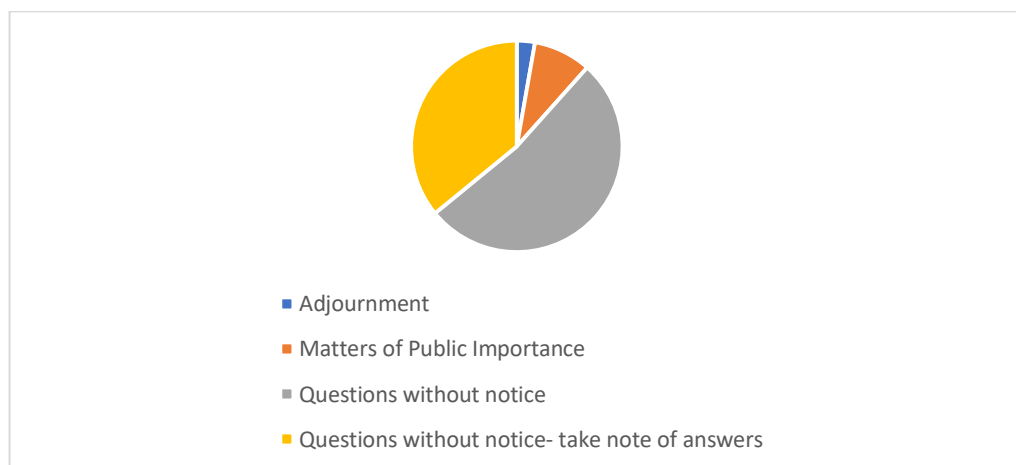


Figure 14: Speeches made in the Senate referring to live export and used in the study sample

Together the parliamentary speeches, newspaper articles and interviews, once deconstructed for themes, served to identify the narrative that was unfolding.

In the space of six weeks, the federal government made four changes to Australia's live export policy. The first variation of policy occurred on the evening of 30 May 2011 immediately after the *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program was aired, when Minister Ludwig announced a parliamentary inquiry into live export and a moratorium on the installation of the Mark I restraint boxes developed and installed by MLA. Less than 24 hours later, the government announced the second policy change: the immediate suspension of trade to the abattoirs seen in the *Four Corners* program, only to expand that policy to cover all facilities in Indonesia on 8 June 2011, and then reverse the decision on 6 July 2011. It is easy, therefore, to assume that policy change was a direct response to the *Four Corners* program. This research shows that although the program did indeed serve as the initial hook to draw attention to the issue, it was not enough for the animal activists to hold control over narrative. As Coalition politician A said: "you don't conduct government and make policy via the television."⁶³

This chapter explores the evidence collated and follows the evolution of a narrative which developed through the reporting of the live export crisis in the media with reference to articles written by or in partnership with journalists who are located within the federal Canberra press gallery. The research exposes dominant themes and deconstructs them in relation to the political context to illustrate the factors required for advocacy to have maximum effect on policy makers.

Four Corners, "A Bloody Business" (2011)

Whether Australia should or should not export animals for slaughter has been a recurrent public issue. There is an impression that is reflective of Habermas (1989) and his public sphere theory that the topic only emerges within the political space when the media are used as a mechanism to spread the message. While this study finds such an assumption hard to refute, information and material supplied in this

⁶³ Coalition politician A.

chapter emphasise that the *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011), acted as a trigger for the federal Labor government to re-evaluate their policy of exporting live cattle to Indonesia. The policy shift occurred due to pressure being applied to policy decision makers by multiple forces, including politics, the media and community advocacy identified as the various forces in shaping the public sphere (Habermas, 1989). In support of this observation, evidence obtained from a press gallery journalist in an interview for this research paper suggests that the program did not command high viewing figures and rated poorly. Journalist A says:

Although everyone was talking about it the following week, not everyone saw it at the time it aired. We went back and watched it online, but you didn’t need to see the actual program. There was enough information being generated for you to know what it was all about.⁶⁴

This comment was backed up by the PR consultant employed by the industry who said in an interview for this thesis that: “All the industry heavyweights were huddled up in a hotel room in Sydney watching it, but the average punter... they didn’t sit down to watch it ... promos were bad enough and gave a good enough idea really”.⁶⁵

The program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) was unprecedented on Australian television, not only because of the gruesome nature of the footage, but because animal slaughter was not a subject that is normally broadcasted into the lounge rooms of suburban Australians, not even if practices were up to animal welfare standards. There was a consensus by all the four journalists interviewed for this research paper that the footage was shocking. Journalist D in his interview for this research said that: “The slitting of the throats with such regularity. This hadn’t been seen before. It was simply designed to shock the senses.”⁶⁶

This study found that both supporters and opponents of the ban to live export and interviewed for this thesis found, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011)

⁶⁴ Journalist A.

⁶⁵ PR consultant.

⁶⁶ Wade, F. (Interviewer), Journalist D (Interviewee) (2016, February 5)

to be a skilfully produced piece of television, with reference made to the high standard of the program by almost all respondents.⁶⁷ Some months after the broadcast it won the ABC team a prestigious Gold Walkley award (“Walkley winners for 2011”, 2011), despite the program recording the lowest ratings for *Four Corners* in 2011. However, it was not surprising that the program was highly polished, given the reputation of Ferguson as being “ruthless” and “formidable” and a “forensic interviewer.”⁶⁸ Speaking to *Crikey*, former ABC reporter Monica Attard said, “She’s [Ferguson] a one-woman journalistic powerhouse. A lot of very good journalists plod through their careers without everyone eagerly anticipating their next report. Sarah’s an exception: we wait for her stories with bated breath” (Knott, 2011). In the Canberra press gallery, Journalist B, a former colleague of Ferguson’s, agreed with the comments by Attard, saying: “She is a hard worker and once she gets her teeth into a story she doesn’t let go. But just amazing to work with.”⁶⁹ When asked to expand on what it was about Ferguson that made her amazing, her former colleague referred to the way that she wanted her stories told – that they had to include feeling. This is supported by other anecdotal references (in conversation, Parliament House, Canberra, 6 October 2015) from across the media industry, where there appears to be blanket admiration for her ability to visualise a story or a moment. This research concluded that across the industry, and particularly within the ranks of the ABC, Ferguson is held in high regard. But that high regard is also heard from other quarters as well. Speaking with politicians who have been interviewed by Ferguson, their admiration was evident, as too their fear. Labor politician B said: “I have been interviewed twice by her [Ferguson], and each time I made sure I was really prepared – probably more so than for anyone else. You just know she is tough.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷Animal activist A; Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Independent politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; Journalist A, 2016; Journalist B; Journalist C, 2016; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C; PR consultant.

⁶⁸ Journalist A, Journalist D.

⁶⁹ Journalist B.

⁷⁰ Labor politician B.

Ferguson has a background in literature and theatre which is evident in her use of language. Her love of poetry is on public record, saying, when interviewed for a weekend feature that appeared in the *SMH*: “There is no moment in my life which isn't made better by poetry or no sadness or loss that isn't comforted by it” (Wood, 2016). This sense of the poetic is evident in her reporting and illustrated in her voice for, “A Bloody Business”, for example:

Intense smells and blood everywhere and, in the corner, a white steer, legs tied, smashing its skull on a concrete floor, trying to get up. The metal killing box next to it had MLA stamped on the side, Meat and Livestock Australia (Ferguson, 2011).

All four journalists interviewed for this thesis used the word “dramatic” when describing the *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011).⁷¹ As Journalist D said: “It [the program] was really theatrical ... it had a true sense of drama about it ... it was designed to shock”;⁷² it was apparent that Ferguson was aware how to produce a creative piece of journalism (Fulton & McIntyre, 2013).

All 17 respondents who took part in interviews said that what they saw on the *Four Corners* program was brutal and unacceptable.⁷³ The program showed cattle being repeatedly kicked and beaten by the slaughtermen, who broke their tails and gouged the animals’ eyes and nostrils with their fingers. The cattle were seen falling on wet concrete and other cattle were witnessed climbing over each other in the raceway leading to the Mark 1 slaughter box and fully conscious animals were filmed having their throats cut. One animal was abused until it fell on the ground with a broken leg and was then further ill-treated by the workers as they tried to make it stand. Cattle were filmed visibly trembling as they watched other cattle being slaughtered; a reaction caused by emotional distress according to the

⁷¹ Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D.

⁷² Journalist D.

⁷³ Animal activist A; Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Independent politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C; Parliamentary media adviser A; Wade, F. (Interviewer), Parliamentary Media Adviser B (Interviewee) (2016, February 13); PR consultant.

activists. Lyn White says in the program: “A steer stands there trembling violently as it watched its mates cut up around it. They were clearly cognisant of what was going on and it was causing them extreme fear” (Ferguson, 2011). The distressing scenes were accompanied by a “mournful” bellowing coming from the cattle, which added another dimension to the emotion-packed program.

But claims as to the validity of the vision on the program (Ferguson, 2011) were raised by industry spokespeople, two journalists as well as two of the three Coalition politicians interviewed for this research.⁷⁴ One such example, according to Coalition politician A, is the claim that the animal seen trembling in the footage was not having an emotive reaction to seeing the slaughter of the cattle in front. Coalition politician A denies this is the case at all, and that what is being seen and portrayed as an emotive response is a physical one. He said:

Any veterinarian would recognise that as a condition called transit tetany which occurs in animals that are in good condition, that come out of a feedlot, that have been transported, have been denied food and water. What happens is they have a sudden drop in their blood calcium levels which causes their muscles to go into spasms. This is not an emotive reaction. The RSPCA said I was wrong, so I wrote to large animal vets and I think we had a combined professional knowledge of 500 years. All saying that condition is transit tetany.⁷⁵

This thesis finds that the impact of advocacy can be assisted with the use of images to boost audience participation and political engagement in the pursuit of policy change, which is discussed further in Chapter Nine. By referring to the ABC program as advocacy, this research acknowledges that there is a predetermined outcome in the mind of the journalist (Peucjaud, 2018; Careless, 2000).

Industry made formal complaints to the ABC, questioning the authenticity of the footage, especially in relation to the bellowing of the cattle with claims that the

⁷⁴Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; Journalist B; Journalist A.

⁷⁵Coalition politician A.

noise volume had been turned up for dramatic effect. A Fairfax journalist, referred to in this research as Journalist D, said:

I have no doubt in my mind that the sounds of the cattle were turned up. No doubt about it. You can do that kind of thing in an edited package, to get the kind of end result that you want.⁷⁶

The belief that there was a tenor of subterfuge behind the program, reverberated within the transcripts from the three Coalition politicians who took part in this study,⁷⁷ suggesting that the program was theatrically presented and the violence overly gratuitous. In contrast, the three Labor politicians and the independent politician interviewed for this project did not question the veracity of the footage.⁷⁸ Considering that the original premise of the program came from the animal activists who had a very public agenda of stopping the export of live animals, it is not surprising that the program portrayed the industry in a negative light (Ferguson, 2011). As Journalist D says: “I would go so far as to say it was a deliberate act of sabotage [on the industry].”⁷⁹

In the aftermath of the ABC airing the program, death threats were made to several cattle producers, the offices of ALEC and the CCA, and numerous electoral offices had security incidents perpetrated by anti-live export campaigners⁸⁰. Industry spokesperson B, who travelled to support the owners of one station in the Northern Territory, said: “It was just insane. Here we had people who said they were sticking up for animal welfare wanting to kill people.”⁸¹ It is of interest to note that this research found no evidence of the death threats being reported in the media; however, according to the four journalists interviewed for this paper, the threats were common knowledge. When asked why it was not reported, one respondent said: “I can’t quite remember why ... We probably didn’t have proof but then I don’t think we looked for proof. In the first few days it was all about the

⁷⁶ Journalist D.

⁷⁷ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C.

⁷⁸ Labor politician A, Labor politician B, Labor politician C, Independent politician A.

⁷⁹ Journalist D.

⁸⁰ Coalition politician A, Industry spokesperson B.

⁸¹ Industry spokesperson B.

horrible things happening to the cattle.”⁸² This comment indicates that the media were choosing what is newsworthy and therefore setting the agenda (DeFluer, 2010; Domke, Shah & Wackerman, 1998). As this research will show, the agenda priorities as set by the media evolve and change as time progresses and other interest groups raise their profile.

The following data collated in this study has been divided to reflect a timeline that highlights the trajectory of events that took place. During the media coverage, themes emerged within the reporting, providing clear direction for this thesis to develop findings which will assist those involved in shaping policy change. Discussion on the emergent themes will continue in this chapter.

The media response

A small number of articles regarding the suspension of the live export trade appeared in the days prior to the *Four Corners* program. *The Age* reported on 28 May 2011 that trade to three abattoirs had been suspended indefinitely after the industry was shown a segment of graphic footage by animal activists (Gray, 2011a). The suspension of the trade in this instance was an example of industry self-regulating animal welfare practices and was not at the behest of government. The then CEO of the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association, Luke Bowen, is quoted in the *Sunday Territorian* as saying that the suspension was necessary because: “We saw very bad practice and unnecessary handling of cattle ... We don’t envisage it will have a long-term impact on demand as there are a lot of registered abattoirs in Indonesia” (Calacouras, 2011a).

The ABC began to run advertisements for their upcoming program on live export one week before the *Four Corners*, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) went to air. This alerted the public to the upcoming program while also priming the media, as evident in a *Courier-Mail* article published on 28 May 2011, where comment on the ban to the three abattoirs and the upcoming ABC program was sought from government. While Ludwig was not quoted, a spokesperson for the Minister was reported as saying that the government would not take a decision on

⁸² Journalist D.

the ban until footage from the ABC had been seen (Williams, 2011). In the article, it is possible to accuse the RSPCA chief executive, Heather Neil, of using adversarial and provocative language with her comments that industries' response to the footage shown to them was a predictable public relations exercise. Neil continues: "LiveCorp and Meat and LiveStock Australia are completely aware of their culpability in animal cruelty in Indonesia and are terrified that it is about to be exposed ... They have a track record of only acting when exposed and it's time that the government and producers called them into account" (Williams, 2011).

Up to this point the *Four Corners*' program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011) had not been seen by the animal activists, public, the government, opposition or industry; however, in the lead-up to the program, Animals Australia and the RSPCA showed selective snippets of footage to several sympathetic politicians and verbally briefed Coalition and representatives from industry.⁸³ This is supported by Labor Member for Fremantle, Melissa Parke MP, who said in the media the day before the program went to air, "I have seen the footage and it made me physically sick" (Williams, 2011). The Gillard government made no substantial comment on the reports of animal welfare breaches, even when industry announced the suspension of exports and work practices investigations into three abattoirs. The first public comment came moments after the *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program finished, with an official statement from Ludwig (Appendix J). Less than 24 hours later, and prior to Ludwig fronting the media at the press conference held in the Blue Room, Parliament House at 1.40pm, Tuesday 31 May 2011, his office released another statement (Appendix K). Both statements made direct mention of the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), providing concrete evidence of the importance and role played by the program in the government's decision to cease trading with the facilities identified in the footage and suggests that the program acted as a trigger for the events that followed. It is also apparent that Ludwig was keeping further action open; although a blanket ban was not envisaged, according

⁸³ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Independent politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Labor politician A, Labor politician B.

to numerous respondents on both sides of the political fence and interviewed for this research.⁸⁴

According to journalist Kelly Burke, the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) was:

An unprecedented joint investigation by the RSPCA and Animals Australia found that the slaughter boxes provided to Indonesian abattoirs by Meat and Livestock Australia and LiveCorp, with the support of the Federal Government, have resulted in the slow torturous death of millions of animals over the past 10 years, using methods which are illegal in Australia and are in breach of international animal health guidelines (Burke, 2011a).

A large majority of the articles that appeared in the newspapers and the comments recorded in the transcripts of the interviews conducted for this research support public rhetoric that the reaction to the program was overwhelming (Allard & Willingham, 2011a; Fraser, 2011a; Hockley, 2011a).⁸⁵ The export of live cattle appeared as a lead item on television, radio and across the internet behind the carbon price, Australian casualties in Afghanistan and international football bribery (Jackson, 2011).

The main thrust of the reporting immediately following the program was on the horrific scenes witnessed the government's decision to call for an investigation into the footage, referring to the ABC program, and to suspend the live trade to 11 Indonesian abattoirs as seen on the program. All mastheads in this study sample carried coverage of Ludwig's response to the program, and quoted passages from his media release.⁸⁶ What is striking in the government's initial response is the lack of interviews that Ludwig conducted. Parliamentary media adviser A, who worked

⁸⁴ Coalition politician A; Coalition Politician B; Labor Politician B; Labor Politician C.

⁸⁵ Animal activist A; Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist D; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C; Parliamentary media adviser A; Parliamentary media adviser B; PR consultant.

⁸⁶ *Advertiser; Australian; Australian Financial Review; Canberra Times; Courier-Mail; Daily Telegraph; Herald and Weekly Times; Herald-Sun; Mercury; Sydney Morning Herald; The Age; The Land; West Australian*

for the government said: “We identified which media were not going to be as brutal as others. There were some that just didn’t matter what we said, they were always going to put us through the wringer.”⁸⁷ This suggests that the Minister’s office had direct input into which journalist – and thus which media outlet – they would talk to, dependent on whether they felt that the Minister was going to be given a fair hearing or not; this provides evidence of the relationships that are fostered between media operatives that work within Parliament House and politicians and vice versa.

One visual feature that stood out in the footage, and was referred to in some newspapers (Burke, 2011b; Grattan, 2011a) as well as in the interviews with respondents,⁸⁸ was the easily identifiable Australian markings on the side of the Mark 1 restraint box, manufactured and supplied by MLA as seen in the image below.



Figure 15: Roping of legs prior to opening of a Mark 1 restraint box, *Four Corners*, “A Bloody Business” (Pic: ABC/Four Corners)

Seeing the branding on the box instantly tied the practices in Indonesia to Australia and the Australian government. Labor politician A said that: “Not only was it our cattle, but you could see our government was involved with the words MLA and

⁸⁷ Parliamentary media adviser A.

⁸⁸ Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

LiveCorp branded on the side of the restraint box.”⁸⁹ The media release indicates that Ludwig: “directed the department to implement a moratorium on the installation of any new Mark 1 restraint boxes as seen being used in the footage” (Appendix J); this is a blatant indication of the direct correlation between the *Four Corners* program and decisions being made at the ministerial level.

Evidence indicates that decisions by the Labor government that included the ban of cattle to the eleven abattoirs featured in the program had bipartisan support.⁹⁰ There was also bipartisan support for the inquiry that Ludwig announced would be conducted. As stated by Coalition politician C: “There was no argument from us. We were all supportive of the ban to the abattoirs featured on the program. There was no problem there at all and we said that to the government.”⁹¹

Themes emerging within the reporting

As mentioned in Chapter Three, this study considered a theme to be dominant when it appeared across more than one masthead and on more than two successive days. Themes that appeared within the collated newspaper articles and seen in Figure 13 on page 112 of this thesis include animal welfare, people-power, making stories personal, effect on farming communities, government failings, Rudd to the rescue, the opposition, animal activists discredited, Indonesia and diplomacy, race, banning the trade and the concern with animals versus people. Research into the media surrounding live export from June 2011, suggests that the themes as listed in the following text are emerging within the narrative due to explicit framing on the part of the journalist/politician/lobbyist/activist. This indicates intent to offer a point of view determined by the framer which directly relates to a political strategy, supported in theoretical discourse by Habermas (1989). Evidence shows that the tenor of such discourse is purely dependent on which side of the debate the framer is situated. As Entman (1993, p. 52) defines: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a

⁸⁹ Labor politician A.

⁹⁰ Coalition politician A, Coalition politician B, Coalition politician C, Independent politician A, Industry spokesperson A; Labor politician A; PR consultant.

⁹¹ Coalition politician C.

way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.”

The dominant themes that emerged during the media storm of 2011 over live export are extracted and discussed within this chapter. These themes include people-power, the emergence of a crisis, banning the trade, people versus animals and animal welfare as shown in Figure 16 below. It is prudent in the discourse to recall that each article reflects a writer’s reality while one may call attention to some aspects of reality to the exclusion of others. It is important to acknowledge the competition between journalists and politicians jostling for competing news frames and a spot in the media. As Entman (1989) and Riker (1986) contend, and which is evident in this research, framing in the context of this case study aligns with the desire to exert political power over a way of thinking. A clear example of this journalistic framing is discovered when the newspaper articles appearing within the first week after the *Four Corners* program aired used descriptive words that were extremely negative and emotive. They included: horrific (Grattan, 2011a), brutal (Beatty, 2011; Burke, 2011a; Fraser, 2011a; Johnson, 2011) barbaric, disturbing (Hockley, 2011a) graphic (Jackson, 2011), horrendous (Johnson, 2011) distressing, shocking (“Meat trade needs neighbourly help”, 2011), inhumane (Anderson & Cranston, 2011; Wockner, 2011), or the visually evoking “cattle being clubbed to death and skating around on their own gore” (Burke, 2011a).

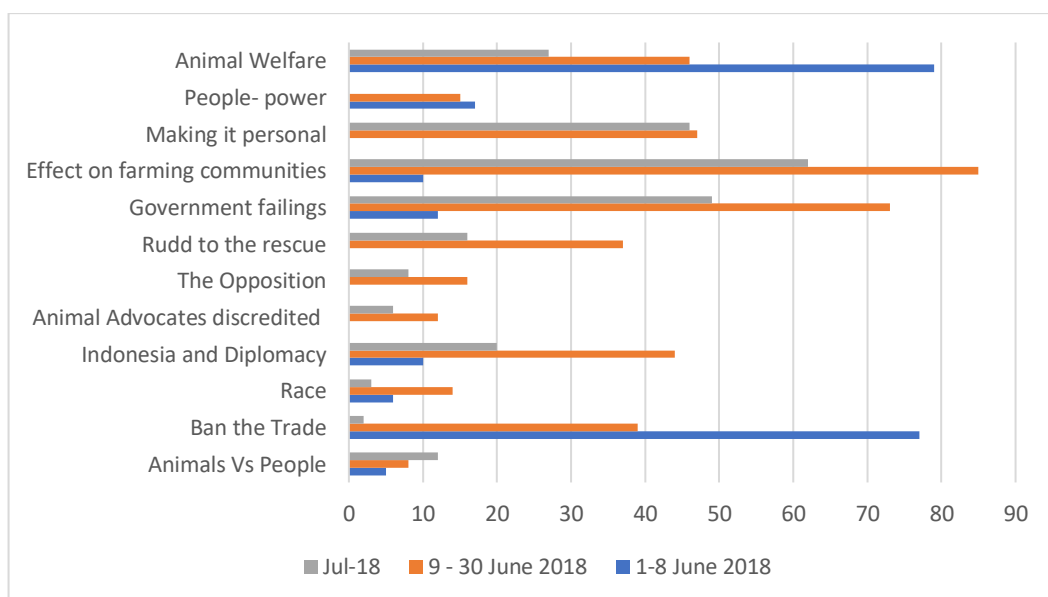


Figure 16: Themes appearing within the newspaper articles June – July 2011.

People-power

Whether there was one specific factor that caused the Labor government in 2011 to change live export policy cannot be determined from the evidence collated for this thesis. Instead, what can be illustrated is the number of influences that acted together to determine change. This study found that numerous articles appeared in newspapers which mentioned the frenzied public outcry against the trade, and this theme resonated throughout the “crisis” (Alford, 2011a; Allard & Willingham, 2011a, 2011b; Barrass, 2011a; Fraser, 2011b; Grattan, 2011b; Hockley, 2011a; Willingham, 2011a, 2011b to name a few). According to Labor politician A: “Even if we didn’t have the emails coming into the office, the press was on the phone telling us how upset our constituents were. We read it in the papers.”⁹² Coalition politicians on the opposition backbench agreed.

One of the angles the media were running with was that there was overwhelming public disgust at what was happening in Indonesia. And yes, that is true, we did get an unprecedented number of people calling in, emailing calling for something to be done. The intensity of the public outcry was a media story in itself and did go some way to make sure that neither the government nor us [sic] ignored it.⁹³

The groundswell of public support for the animal activists could not have come from the ABC program alone, its poor ratings are testament to that, substantiated in an article by Sally Jackson who says that, “the smallest audience of any *Four Corners* episode so far this year [2011] ... has had a big impact ... only 494,000 metropolitan viewers saw the program” (Jackson, 2011). Support was achieved using the combined efforts of aligned activist groups with the help of gruesome footage, the like of which had never been seen before on public television.

In interviews with four members of the media who reported on the events of 2011, it appeared that they understood that the enormity of the public response

⁹² Labor politician A.

⁹³ Coalition politician C.

illustrated a level of power that was rarely unleashed on Canberra.⁹⁴ According to the PR consultant employed by the live export industry, in the first few days after the *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program, “the media ran more articles on the livestock cruelty than they had done on any domestic issue for six years.⁹⁵ Many of these articles made reference to the public’s response to the cruelty of the live export trade, citing the *Four Corners* program as the trigger for the public’s interest in live export and therefore supporting assertions being made in this study. The transcripts of the media professionals interviewed for this paper indicated the public’s response. As said by Journalist B:

I cannot recall a time when my readers were so worked up about an issue. And granted, the majority were city folk. What *Four Corners* did was shine a light on some rather disgusting behaviour that many voters believed the government had the ability to fix. The government had no choice but to listen.⁹⁶

What these examples highlight is that there was a force behind the public momentum, reflected in the media post-*Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) which was, in turn, felt and noticed by the politicians. While this momentum may have been started by the animal activists, it appears to have been overtaken by ordinary Australians in metropolitan and urban Australia. Rallies against live export were held in all the major cities across the country, demanding the end of the trade. As the crisis persisted, reference to the enormity of the public’s response would often be seen in the final paragraphs of the article, as explanation as to why the government enforced the ban on the trade (Austin, 2011b; Lentini, 2011; Rickard, 2011a).

⁹⁴ Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist D; Parliamentary media adviser A; Parliamentary media adviser B; PR consultant.

⁹⁵ PR consultant.

⁹⁶ Journalist B.

A crisis

The events which occurred in 2011 to the live export industry are referred to by an overwhelming proportion of the media, politicians and industry as a “crisis” and this terminology remained consistent throughout the narrative as illustrated in Figure 17 below.

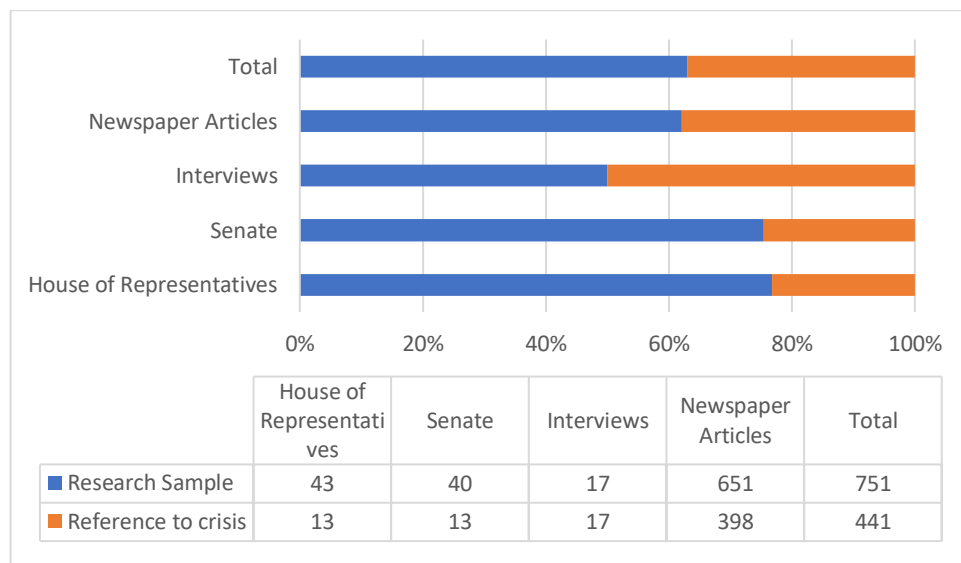


Figure 17: Proportion of the research sample that referred to the events in June 2011 as a “crisis”.

The framing of the article and/or parliamentary speech determined the objects of the crisis. Reflecting news values by Galtung and Ruge (1965), the journalists preferred to present the news in the form of a story with heroes and villains. Illustrated in Figure 18 on the following page, a number of articles, editorials and opinion pieces were written very clearly with the cattle as the victims, industry the villains and the animal activists the heroes (Burke, 2011a, 2011b; “Stop this cruel, senseless slaughter”, 2011; Willingham, 2011b) whereas other articles were written with the industry as the heroes whose practices were saving animals from harm (Alford & Wilson, 2011; Alford & Vasek, 2011; Klan, 2011). This is especially evident in editorials and articles appearing in *The Australian* and the *AFR*, where it is claimed that Australia has an excellent record in animal welfare practices and that if Australia pulled out of Indonesia then the plight of the animals in slaughterhouses

would only get worse (“Meat trade needs neighbourly help”, 2011; McKenna & Shanahan, 2011; “Probe to act on cruelty to cattle”, 2011).

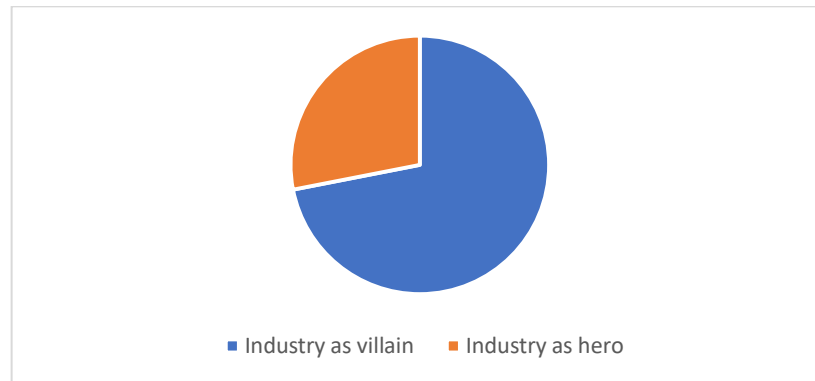


Figure 18: Proportion of newspaper articles and their perception of who was the villain in the first week of June 2011.

As determined through scholarship on crisis management, the complexity of crisis situations allows for responses to create multiple interpretations depending on the stakeholder. Ulmer, Sellnow and Seerger (2007) suggest that organisations manipulate the message within a crisis to ensure that the organisation is viewed favourably, and evidence collated for this thesis supports this assertion.

With live export being debated in the party room of the Coalition, within the caucus of government and in the street, there was little doubt that it had captured the attention of the Australian public. From the instant the story broke, there was an overwhelming negative response to both the industry and the government as evident by the tone and focus of the newspaper articles and supported by comments in the interviews of all 17 respondents. On 1 June 2011, there were twenty-seven newspaper articles mentioning the live export of cattle to Indonesia published in the mastheads chosen for this study. Twenty-two of these articles condemned what viewers had seen on *Four Corners* and called for government and the industry to act to end the cruelty (Allard, 2011a; Andersen, 2011; “Australia must help stop cruelty”, 1 June 2011; Beatty, 2011; Burke, 2011a; Caddick, 2011; Coorey, 2011a; “Education key to stopping cruelty”, 1 June 2011; Grattan, 2011; Harvey, 2011; Hockley, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Katter, 2011; “Meat Trade needs

Neighbourly help”, 1 June 2011; Mckenna, 2011a; Rickard, 2011a; Rickard, 2011b; “Stop this cruel, senseless slaughter”, 2011; Veness, 2011; Williams, 2011; Willingham, 2011; Wood, 2011a).

As stated by the PR consultant who had been employed by the industry: “It was obvious from the moment that the story went to air, that people wanted someone to blame and that someone was easily industry with government coming a close second. It was a reputational nightmare.”⁹⁷

Reputational damage is a hallmark of a “crisis” and this study indicates that the news coverage contributed to damaging Australia’s reputation as a provider of safe and high-quality agricultural produce to trading partners. Indonesia’s threat to go to the WTO citing discrimination was reported in the days immediately after the ban was announced (Allard & Willingham, 2011c, Franklin, 2011a). But what was not reported, as all three conservative politicians discussed in interview, was the effect of the ban contributed to views that Australia was becoming a “sovereign risk.”⁹⁸ While usually a term associated with the risk of a less developed country government defaulting on their foreign currency debts to banks or developed countries (McKenzie, 2014), the term has been used more frequently by the conservative side of politics, defining it as the threat to foreign confidence in doing business with Australia. As stated by Coalition politician C in interview:

For the first time ever, the Labor government made this country a country of sovereign risk. I had business leaders ringing me concerned that if the government could cut off an industry and destroy trade links just like that, then why couldn’t that happen to any industry.⁹⁹

The interview transcripts show that Labor and independent politicians did not have the same fears and when asked, were reluctant to comment that such reservations had been expressed by other industries or other countries who trade with Australia. The potential damage to the Indonesian-Australian trade relationship and the potential for the live ban to have a negative effect to the packaged beef industry

⁹⁷ PR consultant.

⁹⁸ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C.

⁹⁹ Coalition politician C.

was raised in conservative leaning mastheads such as *The Land* and *The Courier-Mail* (Bettles, 2011; Hockley, 2011; Marshall, 2011), meanwhile *The Age* reported the ban as a “boost to chilled meat exports” (Willingham, 2011).

Animal welfare

Analysis of the media articles that appeared in the first week following the broadcast of, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) showed that the over-arching theme emerging from the articles was a focus on animal welfare in stark contrast to animal rights. This was in parallel to the program which presented concerns as to how the animals were slaughtered and did not focus on the act of slaughtering the animals in the first place, thus making the distinction between animal welfare and animal rights.

Articles appearing in the media represented opinions from differing groups. This included journalists, politicians, political commentators, animal advocates, animal industry representatives and veterinarians as shown in Figure 24 on page 166 of this thesis. While the source and authorship of the articles may have differed, the dominant theme of concern for animal welfare was consistent across the board. Articles accepted and promoted concepts of humane slaughter in contrast to what had occurred. Articles also considered the idea that slaughter not carried out humanely is problematic to the Australian people and that there needed to be solutions to amend what was occurring rather than totally abolish the practice altogether.

During the first week, there was an attempt by industry to highlight Australia’s high standards in animal welfare (Rickard & Loney, 2011), which are known to be above international requirements. In one article, cattleman John Wharton is quoted as saying: “It is not the way we do things in this country” (Coorey, 2011a). Meanwhile, independent senator Nick Xenophon and House of Representative’s Andrew Wilkie were being quoted saying, “if abattoir workers in Australia treated beasts in such a fashion, they would be in jail” (Coorey, 2011a).

This is in fact quite true. Had such animal cruelty been found in Australian abattoirs, state laws could be enforced, and prosecutions would have most likely

occurred under the *Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption (AS 4696)*, Abattoir Licensing Acts and animal welfare legislation in each jurisdiction, and the *Commonwealth Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Orders 2005*. These standards cover not only the quality of the facilities but also how the employees must treat the animals. This contrast in standards was raised by the RSPCA's chief scientist, saying the footage highlights, "substandard practices which would be illegal under Australian laws" while the president of the advocacy organisation, Australian Veterinary Association, Dr Barry Smyth, said "the live export of all cattle to Indonesia should be suspended until the same animal welfare standards as Australia's can be assured" (Burke, 2011d). Labor politician A, a long-time anti-live export campaigner whose electorate in Western Australia includes the docklands and wharves from where the live export ships depart, said on the issue of animal welfare:

Consumers are wanting to know where their food is coming from; that it is ethically sourced. I believe that ultimately it will be consumers and not farmers who decide how farm animals are raised and slaughtered. If livestock industries wish to maintain their market share and avoid societal conflict, then they must work towards ensuring their production practices accord as much as possible to consumer expectations.¹⁰⁰

While animal welfare was the theme supported in the transcripts of interviews with the independent politician and Labor politicians, there were stark differences between the views of the Coalition politicians and industry spokespeople. As Coalition politician C said in interview: "As a developed country we have to be very careful about how we apply standards to those countries who are still developing nations."¹⁰¹ Labor politician B, a staunch anti-live export campaigner, said in an interview for this research: "Indonesia was not thinking of cattle in any other way than as a product. They don't have the sensitivities to animal's feelings that we have

¹⁰⁰ Labor politician A.

¹⁰¹ Coalition politician C.

... a more developed understanding of in the West.”¹⁰² Cultural bias and Indonesian perspectives will be discussed later in Chapter Six of this thesis.

As previously mentioned, within 24 hours of the program going to air, export to the 11 abattoirs featured in the program had been banned by the Gillard government with bipartisan support. Industry support was evident with the President of the WA Farmers Federation saying he “supported a ban on facilities which undertook cruel treatment” (Coorey, 2011b), while Leader of the National Party Warren Truss MP said, “cattle growers were just as horrified as the general public” (Coorey, 2011b). The message emanating from the conservative side of politics via media outlets was a belief that what had been filmed and shown in the *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program was not endemic behaviour throughout Indonesia, but only a “few dodgy abattoirs” (McKenna & Shanahan, 2011) had practices that were questionable and that the ban would cost jobs and impact on the wider export market. Major cattle owner Paul Holmes`a Court praised “the federal government for cutting out abattoirs found to be killing Australian cattle inhumanely, which he believed is a minority” (Rickard & Loney, 2011), while station owner Peter Stammers argued that, “the brutal treatment shown in footage was not common” blaming it on “the poor behaviour of a few overseas slaughterhouses” (Rickard & Loney, 2011). One producer who had been in the export trade for over two decades, who is referred to in this research as Industry spokesperson B, said: “In the twenty years I have been travelling Indonesia, I never saw treatment like this [in the footage].”¹⁰³

During the initial days of the ban to the 11 abattoirs, the media provided a platform for commentators and pundits to suggest solutions, with stunning being seen as a necessity for all abattoirs as evidenced by this quote in an opinion piece from political pundit Mark Textor (2011): “Australia should export live cattle only to the 10 or so abattoirs in Indonesia which use stun guns prior to slaughter.” The cattle industry was quoted as saying that Australia should only send cattle to “just 75 abattoirs which meet acceptable standards” (Coorey, 2011b). This position was

¹⁰² Labor politician B.

¹⁰³ Industry spokesperson A.

one of compromise and an attempt to cause the minimum disruption to a multimillion-dollar business as well as maintain supply of a vital food source to Indonesia.

Prior to the announcement of the ban of live cattle to Indonesia, there was evidence of a gentle shift in who was driving the conversation, with the media introducing a narrative that placed cattle producers taking the lead in finding a solution to the crisis, in stark contrast to animal welfare which had dominated the earlier discourse. As said by Ericson, Baranek and Chan: “The journalist is partial to going where the power is” (1987, p. 360). As solutions seemed to be lacking that were agreeable to all parties, the producers were filling the void. This is illustrated with an announcement by the NT Cattlemen’s Association that they would not send their cattle to abattoirs who did not stun before slaughter. The headline in the *Northern Territory News (NT News)* proclaimed, “No Stun, No Send” (Wood, 2011a), while in other articles, it was claimed that “if Indonesia bought cattle from the likes of Malaysia or India, the brutality captured on camera would continue”. This claim was suggested by industry and the three Coalition politicians.¹⁰⁴ Industry spokesperson man B said: “Australia has been improving practices. If we weren’t there then conditions would have been a whole lot worse.”¹⁰⁵ References to Animals Australia and the RSPCA dropped significantly; however, there was repeated reference to *Four Corners* accompanied by negative adjectives when describing the content within the program which was found in the concluding paragraphs of text.

In parallel to the articles that were championing industry as change-makers, there were articles whose tone of argument was more accusatorial towards the industry. In *the Age* 7 June 2011, Willingham writes: “Australia’s livestock industry knew as early as 2000 that cattle being exported to Indonesia were being inhumanely slaughtered” (Willingham, 2011b). In his article he cites numerous reports on the MLA website that detail a history of past poor practice within the live export trade. While there is broad consensus across the reporting that the industry

¹⁰⁴ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Industry spokesperson B.

¹⁰⁵ Industry spokesperson B.

knew slaughter practices in Indonesia were not up to Australian standards, Willingham's assertion that the government did nothing to prevent the incidents in Indonesia from occurring and was therefore complicit in the events that unfolded was a theme that the activists were happy to promote. Animal activist A said: "We had no intention of hiding the fact that we had approached the government way before Lyn [White] and the ABC did the program and that Ludwig, in particular, did nothing."¹⁰⁶ However, it is fair to conclude that the timing of the industry becoming aware of the situation in Indonesia is inconsequential, as in this study sample there is enough of an argument to show that the industry was complicit.

Animals versus people

The mobilising of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) where public opinion was formed in support of the cattle in Indonesia was in stark contrast to how the Australian public responded to the fate of indigenous Australians and asylum seekers. It became somewhat apparent in collating this research that while there is a certain autonomy within the public sphere, this is subject to contending political and economic agendas.

The debate over the reaction to the animals in contrast to the country's handling of particularly asylum seekers was reflected in newspaper commentary and gained some momentum in the first week of the live export crisis. The theme first appeared in an opinion piece published in the *Herald Sun* on 2 June 2011 written by Melbourne shock jock, Steve Price (Price, 2011). Under the headline "Emotions help cook up a storm", he draws a comparison between the public's reaction to the plight of destitute Aboriginal people living in poverty, asylum seekers dying at sea and cattle in Indonesia and how: "Balance and reason disappear with (those) two words – animal cruelty". He raises the important issue of Australia being seen to be meddling in Indonesia's domestic affairs. As again stated by Price, "Indonesia is our nearest big neighbour and we have plenty of issues with how they conduct themselves. The way that they slaughter beef cattle in a couple

¹⁰⁶ Animal activist A.

of isolated cases in remote abattoirs should be way down the list” (Price, 2011). Michelle Grattan agrees, writing in her article for the *Sun Herald* on 5 June 2011 that:

It seems bizarre and even rather offensive to talk about asylum seekers and Australian cattle in the same sentence. But by a strange twist of events Australia faces a similar problem with Asian neighbours in dealing with each of these issues. The difficulty boils down to this: at the end of the day it is extremely hard and probably impossible to control what happens on the ground in certain countries (Grattan, 2011b).

That the Australian public care more about animals than their fellow humans was previously raised in 2006 at the time of the *Cormo Express*, when the *Sydney Morning Herald* published an opinion piece by Labor’s Tanya Plibersek. In criticising the response of animal advocates to the importation by Taronga and Melbourne zoos of eight Asian elephants, Plibersek wrote:

It seems bizarre to be preoccupied with the fate of eight elephants when Thailand faces challenges such as environment destruction on a grand scale and a sex industry that relies in part on the exploitation of children.

The shocking treatment of a cargo of 55,000 live sheep stranded on the *Cormo Express* in the Persian Gulf in 2003 prompted an outpouring of emails and letters to members of parliament.

The treatment of those sheep was disturbing and showed that Australia would preferably be exporting slaughtered and processed meat, rather than live animals.

Also shocking, is in contrast, the hundreds of emails about those sheep and the mere dozen most MPs received after the sinking of the *SIEV-X* in October 2001 and the consequent drowning of 353 people.

Do we really care more about animals than people?

It’s good to treat animals humanely. It’s more important to treat humans so (Plibersek, 2006).

The *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) generated similar responses from other Members of Parliament who questioned the imbalance between issues to do with animals and issues to do with other humans. Coalition politician C recounted how any issue that involved animals generated a huge number of emails from enraged voters and yet their office only received one email calling for action over the mass kidnapping of girls from a school in Nigeria.¹⁰⁷

This view was repeated as a concern by politicians interviewed from the Liberal and National Parties as well as those from industry. Coalition politician A said:

I think people behaved irrationally and blew it out of proportion. We had terrible stories coming out of Indonesia regarding the fate of asylum seekers and these didn't seem to get anyone excited – including Labor caucus mind. They saw there were votes in the cattle stuff. Mind you most of the uproar was coming from metro land – most never set foot on a working farm. But mores the point, what right do we have to tell Indonesia what to do in their facilities.¹⁰⁸

This view by Coalition politician A makes many salient points including the influence of metropolitan voters to sway policy. But the PR consultant employed by the cattle industry believes that the misplaced moral compass has more to do with what is Australian, saying:

There is a very basic response. That comes down to the cattle are recognisably Australian. Seeing a recognisable Australian emblem on the side of the slaughter boxes doesn't help. The refugees aren't Australian. Not in any way. Call it misplaced national loyalty?¹⁰⁹

This theme was evident within seven opinion pieces that appeared within June (Akerman, 2011; Atkins, 2011; Bagaric, 2011; Neilson, 2011; Price, 2011; Wood, 2011b). These articles referenced the disparity between the level of distress displayed by the public and politicians over cattle in contrast to the lacklustre

¹⁰⁷ Coalition politician C.

¹⁰⁸ Coalition politician A.

¹⁰⁹ PR consultant.

response to human smuggling and asylum seekers. This sample contains Piers Akerman's article with its blistering attack on the ethics of the Labor party, including direct reference to the number of politicians who spoke out in caucus over the live export crisis in contrast to the number who expressed concerns on record about Labor's attempts to buy from the Malaysian government a temporary solution to rehousing asylum seekers that arrive in Australia illegally by boat (Akerman, 2011).

Ban the trade – completely

Calls to ban the entire live export trade started to gather momentum in the media from 1 June 2011 which was occurring in parallel to the increasing pressure being placed on government by advocates and the public (Burke, 2011a, 2011b, 2011d; Rickard, 2011a; Williams, 2011a; Willingham, 2011a). As mentioned in Chapter Four, politicians were inundated with an email campaign unlike any other they had experienced, and this observation was supported by comments from all politicians interviewed for this research. Most of the emails were campaign emails generated via the RSPCA, Animals Australia and GETUP! websites and contained a standard message. According to Coalition politician B: "It wasn't what the emails said, it was the sheer number of the emails that made an impression".¹¹⁰ This indicates that there was a social construction of news by organised groups through online networks, and that this allowed "nobodies of the past [to be] the new somebodies" (Booth & Matic, 2011; Castells, 2015).

While some media outlets called for the trade to be banned, the imminent announcement of the government's decision to halt the trade was not widely reported, supporting claims by some respondents that the announcement took everyone by surprise.¹¹¹ Coalition politician A said: "Poor Joe [Ludwig]. He had no idea what was happening. The PM whipped the carpet out from under his feet by announcing the ban."¹¹² On 7 June, the *AFR* ran a small column article on page 4 that had come from the *Australian Associated Press* (AAP) wire service. In the article

¹¹⁰ Coalition politician B.

¹¹¹ Coalition politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Labor politician B.

¹¹² Coalition politician A.

which told of cattle being stopped from loading onto a cattle ship leaving Port Hedland, there was “speculation” that the federal government was going to stop all the trade (AAP, 2011). This lack of foreknowledge is supported in interview with a WA feedlot operator, whose cattle were being held in feedlots waiting to load onto the boats in Port Hedland and is referred to in this research as Industry spokesperson A. He said: “There were other boats waiting to leave from Darwin as well. So, we had rounded up the cattle and had them assembled when I got word that the leave for loading had been withheld. That was it.”¹¹³

The announcement that the government had banned all live cattle to Indonesia came via media reports on 8 June 2011, with articles citing pressure from the backbench, independents and animal welfare groups as being influential (Alford, 2011a, Coorey, 2011c; Grattan, 2011c; Hudson, 2011; Lentini, 2011; Probyn, 2011; Willingham, 2011b). In a Fairfax article, written by Allard and Willingham that ran on page one of both *The Age* and the *SMH*, the words in the first sentence, “...caved in to public and internal party pressure,” clearly indicate who the media considered to be the agents of change (Allard & Willingham, 2011b). The announcement of the ban also saw the Prime Minister take control of the government messaging, speaking publicly on the issue for the first time and announcing that the trade would be suspended for six months, or until welfare standards could be guaranteed. History will show that the ban was in effect for only one month, by which time the industry and government put in place an assurance and audit system called Exporter Supply Chain Assurance Scheme (ESCAS). As would be expected, due to the Nationals’ power base in rural and regional Australia, their leader in the Senate, Barnaby Joyce, was highly critical of the decision, saying that the government had “over-reacted and that will have consequences” (Burke, 2011d).

The fact that government had to revisit their policy decision within one week was not reported favourably. The tone of articles that were published on 8 June in the left-aligned Fairfax media, reported “People-power victory on live exports” but even Michelle Grattan, a known anti-live export campaigner, commented in *The*

¹¹³ Industry spokesperson A.

Age that "... [people-power was] not the only factor driving the decision" (Grattan, 2011c). Grattan's article succinctly captured the events that culminated in the banning of the trade while infusing and framing her commentary to place the focus on the outcome for animal welfare; particularly the last line in which she says, "a permanent ban would have been preferable," leaving the reader in no doubt as to her position on the live export trade. According to press gallery Journalist D, it was hard to keep emotions out of the story:

It can be difficult not to let your emotions get the better of you, and to remain detached, but I actually don't think in this instance you really could. It really was a divided debate. You either were for live export or not. And your personal beliefs could sometimes shine through. Almost a case of subconscious framing.¹¹⁴

The above quote helps illustrate how instrumental the journalist is in the framing of the article which has a direct impact upon what the reader digests.

Chapter summary

This chapter considered the immediate response to the *Four Corners* program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011), as reported within the 14 mastheads in this research sample. It highlighted the immediate reaction of the government, the journalists, industry and politicians interviewed as part of this study. This chapter considered the themes that emerged within the first week of June and illustrated that the animal activists uncovered and discussed evidence that showed the focus of the reporting was on animal welfare.

References to a "crisis" were highlighted and other themes included how the Australian public showed more compassion over the plight of cattle in Indonesia than issues such as asylum seekers. The chapter also points to the power of the citizen and how a fringe issue came to dominate the public and political agenda. This chapter illuminates the involvement of a more organised online campaign by the animal activists, and its part in the social construction of the news. This thesis

¹¹⁴ Journalist D.

asserts that it is evident that the *Four Corners* program at the crux of this research is an example of advocacy journalism due to its visual framing and priming.

The following chapter will continue deconstructing evidence of the media's response to the *Four Corners* program for the remainder of the month of June.

Chapter Six:

Evidence and Observations – Post-8 June 2011

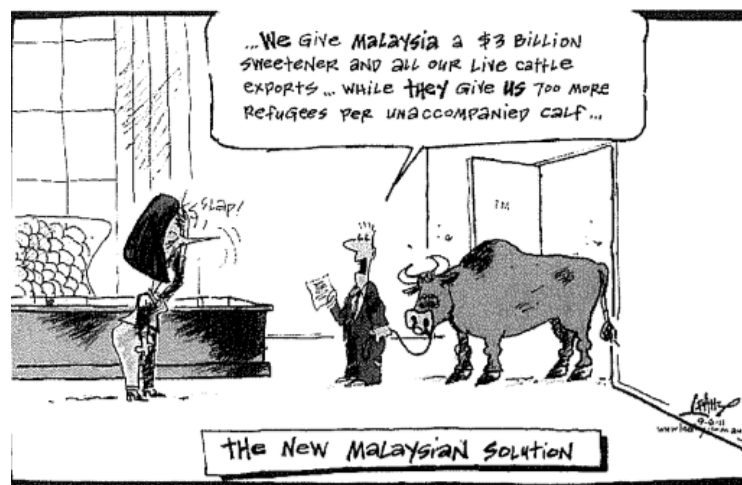


Figure 19: Caption: "...We give Malaysia a \$3 Billion sweetener and all our live cattle exports...while they give us 700 more refugees per unaccompanied calf" Sean Leahy, 'The new Malaysia solution', *Courier-Mail*, 2011.

This thesis has exposed the narrative that evolved in 2011 when the topic of the live export of cattle for slaughter was high on the public and political agenda. What becomes apparent, is the shift in narrative from animal welfare to one focused on fiscal and monetary concerns, evident after the industry took the lead from the advocates to control the agenda. Once the ban to export cattle was in place and the welfare of the animals seemingly dealt with, the media's agenda-setting priorities (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) altered dramatically, due to the economic outlook for rural Australia and the realisation that the news media's reporting of a sudden change to trade policy sent a negative message to Australia's trading partners. The industry primed the news media to visualise a deviance (Ericson, Baranek & Chan

1989) from fair industry standards by saying that the ban hurt farming families. This shift in the narrative was confirmed in interview by the PR consultant who said:

The debate finally turned on about 10 June, with the *SMH* leading with a story that the ALP is changing its stance on the cattle export ban. The heat began to dissipate, and a solution was bound to emerge in the form of limited trade to accredited abattoirs.¹¹⁵

Jones and Davies writes: “Those affected financially by the suspension, not least the exporters themselves, found their voice and through Coalition members, a way to increase the political pressure to re-open the trade” (2016, p. 122). Figure 20 below illustrates the proportion of newspaper articles that led with welfare as a theme opposed to economic concerns and clearly demonstrated the shift in narrative.

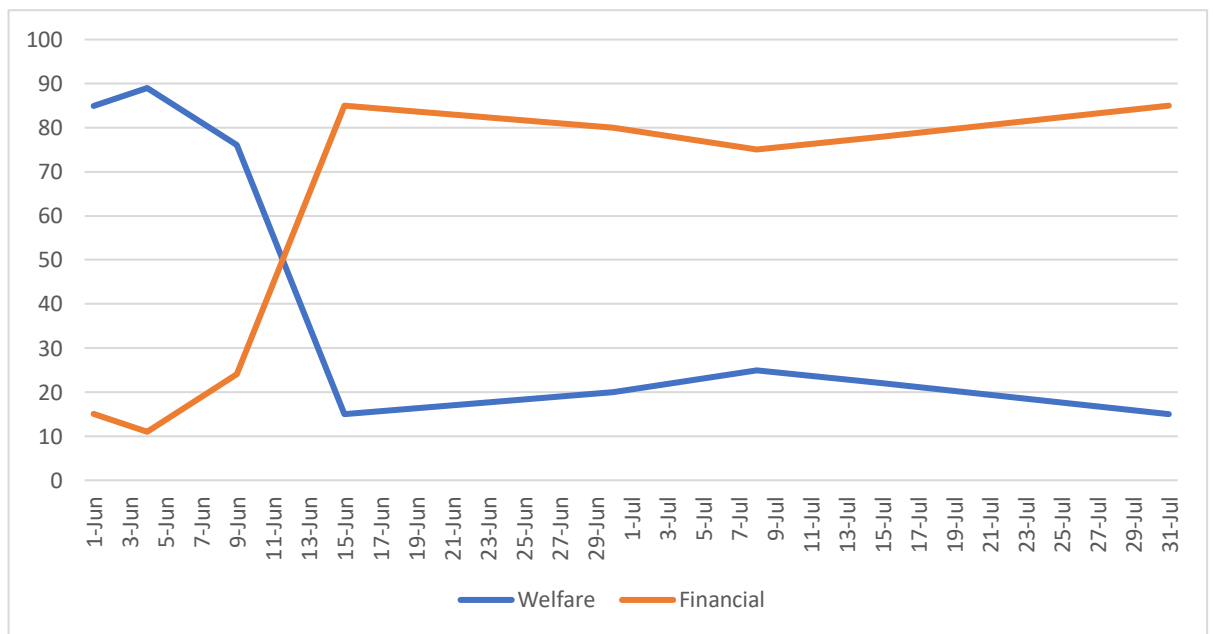


Figure 20: Showing the trend of the narrative by per cent.

A foreign culture

The live export crisis of 2011 did not occur in isolation, and it is important to consider a number of other significant events that occurred and contributed to an

¹¹⁵ PR consultant.

undercurrent of mistrust between the two trading nations, Australia and Indonesia. These included the Bali Bombings of 2002 and 2005 and arrest of the “masterminds” behind the attack, Schapelle Corby’s arrest, trial and incarceration and people smuggling. According to Coalition politician C, within his electorate in regional Queensland, Indonesia was generally a country unknown to many Australians until “the events of the 2006 Boxing Day Tsunami placed Indonesia on the map for the very first time,”¹¹⁶ a reflection in the way that elite nations dominate news values within published outputs (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, 2017), where:

News values can be seen less as a reflection of what type of information citizens want or need, and more as a reflection of organisational, sociological and cultural norms combined with economic factors (Weaver,2007).

With the rise of terrorism and a parallel focus in both the media and on the political agenda, some politicians were dealing with more and more questions from their constituents as to the legitimacy of sending live animals to Indonesia because of its largely Islamic population. *The Australian* 9 June 2011 published a comprehensive feature written by Tim Lindsey, the director of the Asian Law Centre and the Centre for Islamic Law and Society at the University of Melbourne (Lindsey, 2011). He writes that there was a misconception being peddled that the cruelty was a product of “Islamic values”. He points out that “... eye-gauging, breaking bones and stamping on animals is not Islamic butchery but cruelty” and quotes senior Muslim clerics (p. 14). Many articles have gone further to distance Islam from the root cause of events (Johnston, 2011a).

However, the Member for Dawson, George Christensen MP, was reported in the media on 22 June 2011 as claiming in parliament that religion was to blame for cruelty in Indonesian abattoirs. In defending cattle producers in his electorate, he argues that the focus should not be on the cattle industry but on the meatworkers and their “bastardised interpretation of Islamic halal practices” (Gordon, 2011). In

¹¹⁶ Coalition politician C.

expanding upon his comments that appeared in *The Age* and the *SMH*, Christensen said: “I criticised Labor MPs for being very quick to sink the boot into farmers on the issue of cruelty to live cattle exported to Indonesia but not saying anything about the religion that actually inspires the torture of the cattle” (Gordon, 2011). According to the politicians interviewed for this research, the “whole chamber was simply shocked” by the claims from the Queensland MP.¹¹⁷

Coalition politician B, whose electorate is in country New South Wales said that comments such as the above made in Parliament, while not true, reflected the thinking of the average Australian. He said:

Islam is perceived as being so very different to what Anglo-Saxon Australia knows and can relate to. People fear what they don’t understand. It became easy for people to demonise the religion because of the way it is often portrayed. For so many, saying it all happened because of the need for a Muslim to eat halal food was an easy way out. I am sure that the majority of my constituents don’t even really know what halal means – but it is foreign so that is enough.¹¹⁸

The belief that there was a need to educate their constituents about Islam and thus debunking the fear of the unknown was consistent across all seven politicians¹¹⁹ and the seven respondents who worked directly with the media.¹²⁰ As Journalist B who was working for the ABC in 2011, said in interview:

You also must look at the context of the world environment. We have the Muslim extremists and their activities constantly being reported. In so many instances we are told we have to be fearful. Heaven help if we found out that an abattoir in, say, America had substandard practice. I suggest that it

¹¹⁷ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Independent politician A; Labor politician A; Labor politician B.

¹¹⁸ Coalition politician B.

¹¹⁹ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician B; Independent politician A; Labor politician A; Labor politician B, Labor politician C.

¹²⁰ Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D; Parliamentary media adviser A; Parliamentary media adviser B; PR consultant.

would not have been near as easy for the advocates to whip up the public frenzy.¹²¹

The relationship between the two countries and the diplomatic fallout of the live export ban needs to be considered within this thesis and informs research to assist in answering part of the research question that pertains to Australia's role as a contributor to food security. The *Courier-Mail*, in an editorial published on 10 June, was blunt in their assessment of the ban imposed by the Gillard government saying: "... to place a blanket ban on live cattle shipments to Indonesia is knee-jerk policy making at its worse ... and to say nothing of the damage we have done to relations with one of our most valued allies" ("Rushed decision reflects poorly on Government", 2011).

By the end of June, the rural press turned its attention to deconstructing the reaction of the Indonesians and the "miffed" Indonesian government officials (Bettles, 2011b). Pre-empting the resumption of the trade, *The Land* reported that leading Indonesian officials were upset with the situation created by the Australian government and could deliberately stall the process of resuming trade with Australia. Industry spokesperson A, who had cattle stranded in the Northern Territory, said the Indonesians had every right to feel maligned and is quoted in an interview that:

It was outrageous that the Australian government were telling the Indonesians what to do in their country. We were putting a lot of faith on the fact that Indonesia wanted Australia back. It's not like we are the only country out there [that could supply cattle].¹²²

Meanwhile, the opposition's tactic was to court the media with stories that the continued ban on live exports would also impact the frozen meat trade, citing a belief that Indonesia will take reprisals against other Australian products. Journalist B, who covered the live export story extensively said, "... the Libs [Liberals] and Nats [Nationals] went scaremongering."¹²³ However, reports started flowing from

¹²¹ Journalist B.

¹²² Industry spokesperson B.

¹²³ Journalist B.

Indonesia that supported the rhetoric from the opposition that the Indonesians were “taking revenge and looking to other markets” (Kerin, 2011a) and, as previously mentioned in this research, refused to allow veterinarians sent by Australia to inspect abattoirs (Butterley, 2011, Pennells, 2011).

Collated research for this thesis highlights a fear of worsening diplomatic relations between Australia and Indonesia being articulated within the Australian media throughout the crisis. On 9 June 2011, Joyce wrote in an opinion piece for the Fairfax media that the ban caused, “... Indonesian protagonists against stronger bilateral relationships on human trafficking with real political ammunition against us” (Joyce, 2011a). His linkage of cattle to human trafficking is a theme he returned to on numerous occasions and continued to do so. Five years after the ban, Joyce, then Leader of the Nationals and Deputy Prime Minister, suggested that the influx of asylum seeker boats under the previous Labor administration coincided with Australia’s decision to halt live cattle exports. Speaking at the regional leader’s debate held in Goulburn NSW on 25 May 2016, Joyce said:

They [Indonesia] accepted us as a reasonable trading partner. We proved overnight that we weren't. We created immense bad will in the region we live ... Might I remind you that when we closed down the live animal export industry, it was around about the same time that we started seeing a lot of people arriving in boats in Australia (Doran & Hawley, 2016).

Research for this thesis indicates this was not a view publicly attributed to any other politician; however, Coalition politician C, while expressing a sympathetic understanding of the comments made by Joyce, would not agree that there was any link between the cattle ban and the increase in human trafficking emanating from Indonesia and distanced himself from that viewpoint.¹²⁴

Evidence gathered from media reports for this research project indicates that Indonesia felt the impact of the ban acutely, with a lack of beef driving up the prices at the market. President Yudhoyono had become Indonesia's first democratically elected president in 2004 and was steering the country's fledgling democracy towards greater political transparency and economic growth. A

¹²⁴ Coalition politician C.

moderate, Yudhoyono was considered a friend to Australia, and had a solid relationship with former Australian Prime Minister Howard. In early 2005, when he visited Australia for the first time as President, Yudhoyono said, “let it be remembered that when we in Indonesia were down and out and when we needed help most, you came, and you stood by us” (Ferguson, 2011). He was certainly someone that Australia needed to keep onside as Labor struggled to find an acceptable policy to deal with people-smuggling. But as the month progressed, a few more articles were talking of the strained relations between Indonesia and Australia, citing the cancellation of an Indonesian parliamentary delegation (Wood, 2011b) and a senior Indonesian Minister saying publicly that Australia was punishing Indonesia for the Bali bombings (Kerin, 2011b).

The wide reporting of Indonesia’s announcement that they would seek advice from the WTO on whether the ban was discriminatory concerned Coalition politicians¹²⁵ but not Labor politicians, who viewed it as “chest beating” on behalf of the Indonesian government.¹²⁶ *The SMH*, *The Age* and *The Australian* ran the story on page 1 (Allard & Willingham, 2011c; Franklin, 2011a, 2011b), and articles quoting diplomats, warning of retaliation and foreshadowing disastrous bilateral consequences also emerged (Franklin, 2011b; “Indonesia signals diplomatic row”, 2011). Industry spokesperson B, whose own feedlots in northern Australia were still feeding cattle that should have long been sent to Indonesia, said: “It reminded me [the cancellation of the vets] of Saddam Hussein and the search for weapons of mass destruction, only this time it was our industry that was going to be destroyed.”¹²⁷

Animal advocates discredited

Once the initial shock of the program dissipated, mention of the animal activists who began the chain of events became more infrequent, but not that of the program itself. That is until several stories began to appear in the press, in a

¹²⁵ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician C.

¹²⁶ Labor politician B.

¹²⁷ Industry spokesperson B.

deliberate and calculated move on the part of the animal activists, questioning the amount of time it took for the footage to be released, with the RSPCA admitting that the time lag meant that many animals had continued to be brutalised. Driven by the first report emanating from the *Daily Telegraph* where political editor Simon Benson raised question as to the ethics behind the decision of the RSPCA and Animals Australia to not pass on the footage to either industry or government under headings such as “Video games cost lives” and “Blood on their hands” (Benson, 2011a, 2011b). This is an angle that was followed up by pro-live export politicians in parliamentary debate and later in the committee hearings. A spokesperson from the RSPCA justified their decision by saying: “we had to get our ducks in a row” (Benson, 2011a, 2011b).

Discrediting the animal activists was a theme heavily pushed in the conservative-aligned media, and represents an interesting shift in narrative, with the ethics and morals of the animal activists being questioned. Why did they hold onto the footage for several months, allowing for cruelty to continue while the ABC coordinated the film crew, travelled to Indonesia to film and then to package the program? As Industry spokesperson A, whose cattle were being held up in Northern Territory feedlots, said: “It was really hard to see past the fact that they had all this footage for ages, and then only released it when it was going to do major damage to an industry. It was done purely in the self-interest of the organisation ... to put them on the map.”¹²⁸ Several stories appeared in the *NT News* reporting that people in the Territory were outraged at the revelation the RSPCA knew about the cruelty for three months but kept it quiet (Byrne, 2011; “RSPCA holds back on beef”, 2011). The publication of such articles began to peel away at the support that the animal advocates had previously held, particularly the RSPCA. As reported in interview by press gallery Journalist A:

Animals Australia were always considered to be fringe dwellers; but that the respected RSPCA – who gets funding from government - let the behaviours

¹²⁸ Industry spokesperson A.

continue and did go to question their credibility. I'm not sure that they ever managed to successfully argue their case on this.¹²⁹

Within the media narrative, the need to find someone to blame for the fiasco was evident. In an article published in the *SMH* published on 17 June written by Shane Wright (Wright, 2011), Ludwig blamed the Coalition for not going far enough following the events in Egypt that occurred in 2006. Yet, in another article published on the same day, Ludwig is quoted as blaming MLA (Kerin, 2011b). Regardless of the blame shifting that was occurring across all mastheads, there lay an underlying belief (and in most cases overtly reflected) that what was occurring was a complete and utter mess, both politically and economically.

The opposition

In late June, the federal opposition was keen to show their compassion with the farming community. Although there was never any doubt that the Coalition would support the trade given the relationship between the Liberals and the Nationals, it was important for the alternative government to demonstrate and remind the voters of their position on the issue. Leader Tony Abbott was pictured on horseback and his affection for the bush was highlighted in the copy that followed, as he strove to show that he and his party were not just focused on cities but also understood the plight of rural Australia (Barnes, 2011). He was said to be a "keen horseman" when on a trip to the Northern Territory (Jones, 2011). Touring stations affected by the ban, Abbott spoke of the "unfolding disaster" and the need to lift the ban, saying that it was "absolutely vital that we do everything we reasonably can to get the industry going again" (Jones, 2011). His call for the Prime Minister to join him on a visit to Indonesia was labelled a stunt by many in the press gallery (Peake, 2011). Perhaps his suggestion may have been taken more seriously had it not been accompanied by a photo shoot that included him on horseback, jumping cattle fences, mounting a jackaroo's steer during muster, posing next to an 850kg bull and taking over the wheel of a road train.¹³⁰ In the words of a media staffer

¹²⁹ Journalist A.

¹³⁰ Journalist B.

who was interviewed for research and referred to as Parliamentary media adviser B: “It was Tony at his best, on show.”¹³¹

Rudd to the rescue

Understanding the source of the Gillard Government’s instability is of vital relevance to deciphering the extent that internal influences have over decision makers in policy formulation within Australia’s federal parliament. It leads to an appreciation of why decisions were made and goes to explaining why the backbench held had such power. With Gillard holding onto the leadership by the slimmest of margins, and her rival Kevin Rudd still on the front bench, there was a heightened level of politicising policy.

Perhaps it was no surprise, given the apparent failure in the negotiating process, that in late June, the media started calling for Kevin Rudd to step in and tackle the live export crisis. The first mention of Rudd becoming embroiled in the trade fiasco came from the Coalition, with a call from then deputy opposition Leader, Julie Bishop, for Rudd and Trade Minister Craig Emerson to take the lead in the negotiations (Willingham, 2011c) Given the internal discord of the Labor party following the dumping of Rudd as Prime Minister, it could be presumed that this was not an innocent call from the opposition, but a strategic attempt to further destabilise an already fractured government. The opposition would continue to use Rudd as a tactic to highlight the discord within the government ranks right up until he replaced Gillard in 2013. One such example was made on 2 June 2011, when Abbott said in parliament: “Even Paul Howes, the midnight assassin, the hatchet man who put the Prime Minister in office, now realises his mistake. It is like Cassius now realises the mistake he made in assassinating Julius Caesar. I think Paul Howes wants Kevin Rudd back. He really does want Kevin Rudd back” (Abbott, 2011a).

On 24 June, Miranda Rout reported in *The Australian* that Rudd was talking a “frontline position” (Rout, 2011b). In her report, Rout is quoted as saying that Rudd’s intervention came after a “heated exchange” between Rudd and Ludwig

¹³¹Parliamentary media adviser B.

over the handling of the crisis. The *Australian* reported on 30 June that Gillard and Rudd had taken over crisis talks with Rudd, after meeting his Indonesian counterpart, releasing a statement saying that the pair agreed to “work closely together... for the resumption of the trade” (Wilson, 2011a). While Rudd travelled to Indonesia, Ludwig and Gillard were fronting angry cattlemen in the north. Gillard did not travel to Indonesia, saying: “There is not one expert on the relationship between Indonesia and Australia who is recommending that I jump on a plane and go [to Indonesia]” (Ferguson, 2011).

But according to several politicians interviewed for this research, there were calls coming from the public and within parliament for Gillard to travel to Indonesia.¹³² Labor politician C said in an interview for this research: “Given the temperature of the moment, I don’t know why she [Gillard] left it up to Kevin [Rudd] to be seen as the fixer.”¹³³ More discussion on the nature of the relationship between the Prime Minister and her Foreign Minister will follow, as this thesis finds that the relationship between Rudd and Gillard a definite factor in Gillard’s decision-making processes in relation to live export.

Shortly after the media began reporting that Rudd was leading the negotiations, it became clear that Ludwig was being sidelined. By 25 June, *The Australian* was reporting that Gillard, together with Rudd and Emerson, were taking over due to industry and officials’ “frustration with Minister Ludwig’s handling of the crisis” (Rout, 2011c). Quoting “sources close to the negotiations”, the reporting was clearly setting up Ludwig to take the fall for the government and be the scapegoat. Labor politician B said in an interview for this research that: “Someone’s head had to roll and it was pretty clear that Joe [Ludwig] was going to be put out to dry.”¹³⁴ Evidence records the tenor of tone in articles as being derogative towards Ludwig with headlines such as, “Ludwig dithered on matter till the cows came home” (Grattan; 2011d); “Ludwig reduced to cattle prattle” (T. Wright, 2011); “Ludwig’s mess like a red rag to the Rudd bull” (Rout, 2011d).

¹³² Coalition politician B; Labor politician C; Labor politician B.

¹³³ Labor politician C.

¹³⁴ Labor politician B.

Government failings, MLA's faults and compo

By mid-June, stories began to emerge that drew on the government's call for industry (namely MLA) to pay compensation to the farmers for lost earnings and MLA's refusal to do so (see Figure 13). Ludwig was said to be "forcing the beef industry peak body to compensate producers ..." and "locked in a stand-off" (Fox, 2011) while MLA chair, Don Heatley, is quoted in the *AFR* as saying that the "industry's priority is to direct available resources into implementing urgent measures in Indonesia... and give government the confidence to reopen the trade" (Gray, 2011b). By 18 June, reports were coming in that MLA had an animal welfare plan to unveil but this was overshadowed by news that Ludwig may be going to visit Jakarta. The prospect of a visit was on the back of "worsening beef industry and political problems" (Alford, 2011b).

By the final weeks of June, the theme of the narrative focused on a fiscal compensation package (Boyle, 2011; Caldwell, 2011a; Ja, 2011; Townsend, 2011) for the cattle producers, with the government offering support. But this move to assist cattle producers affected by the ban did little to appease the media who had and would continue to paint Ludwig as weak in the light of making tough decisions, although his reported demeanour when dealing with compensation came across as being more forceful, based on anger towards the industry. This was affirmed in interview with Parliamentary media adviser A who said: "Where was the industry? The Minister [Ludwig] was taking all the blame and the industry hung him out to dry."¹³⁵

According to reports in the West Australian media, producers felt that the package offered by the government was far from suitable as seen in the article, "Pilbara pastoralists reject 'miserable' compo offer". But pastoralist Annabelle Coppin stated in the article: "At least it's something and the government is realising the damage they've done to the industry" (Boyle, 2011). The government's rhetoric, as reported in the media, was focused on its commitment to reopening the trade as soon as possible. They were also reportedly in battle with MLA to share part of the

¹³⁵ Parliamentary media adviser A.

financial responsibility and assist with a farmer assistance package (Bettles, 2011c; Fox, 2011, Gray, 2011b). According to Parliamentary media adviser A, working with the Labor government at the time:

It was an ongoing effort to get MLA to accept partial responsibility. For us it was important that our messaging to the public was full of our attempts to get MLA to also put their hands in their pockets. Don't forget, it was their logo on the restraint boxes. And they have access to the producer's levy.¹³⁶

Ludwig's failings were not lost on the media. As reported in one article: "The government has struggled in negotiations with Indonesia to reopen trade, with Ludwig visiting the country last week without being able to secure an agreement" (Alford, 2011b). This was emphasised by Labor politician B who said: "He [the Minister] was just not the right person. He couldn't negotiate with our own people let alone the Indonesians."¹³⁷ In the interviews conducted with the politicians taking part in this research, there was evidence of more support coming from opposition Coalition members than from within his own party as illustrated in Figure 21 on the following page.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Parliamentary media adviser A.

¹³⁷ Labor politician B.

¹³⁸ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

Coalition politician A	Yes
Coalition politician B	Yes
Coalition politician C	Yes
Parliamentary media advisor A	Yes
PR consultant employed by industry	Yes
Industry spokesperson A	Yes
Industry spokesperson B	Yes
Journalist A	Yes
Animal activist A	No
Parliamentary media advisor B	No
Journalist B	No
Journalist C	No
Journalist D	No
Labor politician A	No
Labor politician B	No
Labor politician C	No
Independent politician	No

Figure 21: Respondents who spoke in favour or against Minister Ludwig’s handling of the live export crisis.

Criticism of the government’s handling of the crisis had been relentless from the moment that the program on the ABC aired and the focus of the negative attention was Ludwig. On 9 June, an unnamed Labor MP is quoted in the *Australian* as saying: “After seeing *Four Corners* ... caucus members understood the clear political imperative for action ... instead Ludwig stood up and announced an inquiry.

I wondered if he was from another planet” (Franklin, 2011c). Collated evidence illustrates that the overwhelming consensus of media outlets, both on the left and right of the political divide, considered that the government’s handling of the live export crisis was substandard. The animal advocates are reported as saying the government had not gone far enough, while industry was calling foul with their trade in tatters and Ludwig, supposedly in charge of policy decisions for the sector, is portrayed as being “weak”, “a dill”, “incompetent”, “spineless” and is presented as a Minister who is betraying the industry he was supposed to be representing (Franklin, 2011c, Gannon, 2011a; Grattan, 2011c).

The Caple report delivered to stakeholders in November 2010 (Jones & Davies, 2016) and discussed in Chapter Four, was given more lineage across the country than when first released, with the commentary linking it to the industry being complicit in the cruelty. The claim that industry “had full knowledge of the cruelty” before the ABC program went to air ran on page 1 of the Saturday *SMH* in the last week of June (Burke, 2011e). In a response from MLA and LiveCorp and quoted in the final paragraph of the story, there did appear to be admission of prior knowledge on their part. However, MLA and LiveCorp were at pains to say that the cruelty that they had been informed about only occurred in some abattoirs and that they were rectifying the situation with increased training programs, and that the welfare breeches were not endemic.

Industry spokesperson A, when interviewed for this research said:

The response we sent to Fairfax regarding prior knowledge of the cruelty was quite comprehensive. We disclosed what we were doing to improve animal welfare. But it wasn’t part of the story that they wanted to tell so it ended up being glossed over. I am surprised our response was mentioned at all.”¹³⁹

It was obvious that by late June, while the media still exhibited a relentless interest in the live export industry, the tenor of the narrative had moved away from the footage and animal welfare, and towards the government’s handling or mishandling of events or industry’s inability to correct the poor practice that they knew was

¹³⁹ Industry spokesperson A.

occurring. “We want to take scalps” read one headline in the *Courier-Mail* (Michael, 2011a).

Effect on farming communities – making it personal

This thesis demonstrates that a change in the media agenda occurred when there was a power shift in the crisis (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987). By mid-June, stories were emerging that the cattle unable to be transported to Indonesia were stranded in the northern regions of Australia and facing death by starvation, or slaughter at the hands of cattle producers due to lack of feed (Bryne, 2011a). These stories featured comments by Western Australian Senator, Chris Back, such as in the *West Australian*, where he warns of Australia seeing the “... starvation of animals on an unprecedented scale and an environmental catastrophe that will take 100 years to recover from” (Bridges, 2011). Such stories were reproduced in all the major papers across the country and could still be seen in texts some eight days later. Senator Back also went on the record warning that, if Indian cattle were introduced into the Indonesian markets, there was a real fear that this could see the spread of foot and mouth disease (Harvey, 2011). Back’s warning could be considered an illustration of how live export supporters were using fear tactics in a bid to swing the narrative in support for the trade to resume. Across the country, articles were running under sensationalist headlines in bold and large font that included provocative phrasing such as “New Disaster Looms” (2011), “Cattle Catastrophe Coming” (2011), “Senators Disease Warning” (Harvey, 2011).

As previously mentioned, by then the theme of animal welfare was not the principal driver of commentary on the live export trade, with a ban on live export in place and the mention of RSPCA and Animals Australia dropped significantly. It became apparent that by mid-June, the driver of the narrative being played out through the news organisations had turned from animal welfare to that of the effect on the farming communities, and the impact on remote and rural communities that rely on the trade (Wilson, 2011b). For example, the *Herald Sun* ran a feature by commentator Miranda Devine under the headline, “Ban bleeding the country dry” (Devine, 2011a). Starting on page 34, this was a comprehensive

feature that looked in depth at the “widespread pain” that the ban was causing. Calling the ban, a “knee-jerk response to a TV program,” Devine speaks to generational farmers who were “bewildered and paralysed” by the ban. The journalist used emotive language when the narrative considers the plight of the farmer and negative when considering the actions of the government (Devine, 2011a).

Material uncovered during this research documents that this was far from a natural evolution of the argument but, in fact, an example of the manipulation of the narrative by members of the live export industry. In an interview for this research paper, Industry spokesperson B said: “We needed to own the story. Making it human was the best way, showing just what was happening to all those families that relied on the trade.”¹⁴⁰ Using trusted journalists to prosecute their story was one of the many activities undertaken by the PR consultant working for the industry. One such example is an article that appeared in Fairfax papers in the business section on 14 June (Ferguson, 2011). The placement of the article illustrates the shift in the media’s treatment of the story. In interview the PR consultant said:

Chatted to a journalist friend of mine ... in an ideal world she’d write her piece about the sub-agendas and naivety of the Labor backbenchers and it would be timed to come out just before they headed into caucus. It was a good background briefing and I was hopeful that it would be a balanced piece – meaning presenting my bias.¹⁴¹

This quote illustrates industry priming of the news media and is representative of how news is socially manufactured (Arendt, 2013; Moy, Tewksbury & Rinke, 2016). News is the end result of a selective process, not only from the point of view of the gatekeepers but also by the source of information from which a story is written (McQuail, 1992; Shoemaker, 1991).

According to the PR consultant, another planted story in *The Australian* ran under the headline, “Beef ban closes iconic station”, telling the story of farming icon

¹⁴⁰ Industry spokesperson B.

¹⁴¹ PR consultant.

Sara Henderson's daughter selling her Northern Territory property ("Beef ban closes iconic station", 2011). While there is no doubt that the live export ban certainly had a detrimental impact on the productivity of this cattle station, to say that its collapse was solely due to the ban would be a stretch given that the ban had not been in place for that long. Nevertheless, the timing of the sale and the closure, no matter what the real reason behind the poor fortune, was used by the industry to highlight the impact of the ban on the Northern Territory community. Industry spokesperson C said: "Don't forget we were also just at the tail end of the global financial crisis and exports had been down anyway. Some farmers just simply overextended themselves."¹⁴² The point remains, that this story was a powerful tool used to highlight the plight of the farmer and the industry and thus demonstrating that what the media reproduces is a social construction made by journalists and their sources (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987).

During the last week of June and coinciding with the last week of parliament, cattle men and their families descended upon Canberra to personally campaign for the resumption of the trade. This was widely reported across all mastheads in this study sample. Pictures of sad looking toddlers, wearing oversized Akubra hats accompanied a pitch for the cattle producers to be allowed to continue trading. "We just need trade opened so we can get our livelihood back," a cattle producer from the Northern Territory is quoted as saying in *The Land* (Bettles, 2011d). During the collection of evidence for this research project, it was evident that bringing families to Canberra was a well-crafted PR move by the cattle industry. The industry's PR consultant said:

We had to make the conversation personal and what better way than by bringing a hurting family with young kids. It was an emotive debate, so we had to play on people's emotions. Plus, they were really cute kids.¹⁴³

Making the pro-live export campaign emotive also extended to claims that cattle producers were on suicide watch¹⁴⁴ as evidence within this research show that

¹⁴² Industry spokesperson A.

¹⁴³ PR consultant.

¹⁴⁴ Coalition politician B.

there has been a switch of empathy; with the cattle producers now found at the centre of the emotional component of an injustice frame. This approach aligns with Galtung and Ruge's (1965, p. 71) concept of "distortion", which suggests that what the media portrays is constructed through discourse. Therefore, while there is no denying the reality, it is the narration of the reality that is newsworthy (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). This is supported by the scholarship of Vos and Finneman when they state, "events do not possess drama, they are narrated dramatically" (2017, p. 277).

Chapter summary

Once the ban on Indonesia was imposed on 8 June 2011, there was a shift in narrative with industry becoming the advocate for policy change. While the original framing of the content focused on animal welfare and the horrendous treatment of Australian cattle at the hands of Indonesian slaughtermen and the lack of action taken by the Australian government, the discourse shifted in emphasis to one that placed the cattle producers as the victims. The antagonists were clearly MLA and Minister Ludwig, as the Minister for Agriculture, was comprehensively depicted as weak and ineffective.

Indonesia's response to the ban figured in the reporting, with questions arising querying the strength of the relationship between the two countries and whether the ban would test the strategic friendship. The difference in the cultures of the two countries was also raised as a potential reason for the public outcry. This chapter has shown that the industry was priming the media and there was visual framing that portrayed the ban of the live export as a crisis to the farming communities. The following chapter continues to consider the response to the live export crisis during the month of July.

Chapter Seven:

Evidence and Observations – July 2011



Figure 22: Peter Nicolson. All hat, no humane cattle export plan. *The Australian*, 2 July 2011.

This study shows that the most dominant theme throughout the live export debate that appeared across the 14 mastheads was not of animal welfare, but that of the financial distress the ban had caused the farming community and the fiscal responsibility of the government and MLA. Chapters Five and Six showed the media agenda priorities changed from the animal activists to the industry and cattle producers. Chapter Seven discusses how this narrative continued in July 2011.

The initial outrage of the barbaric practices as reported in the newspapers dissipated quite quickly, whereas the financial damage, calls for compensation and

the government's response to the financial plight of cattle producers was a theme that had greater longevity within the narrative.

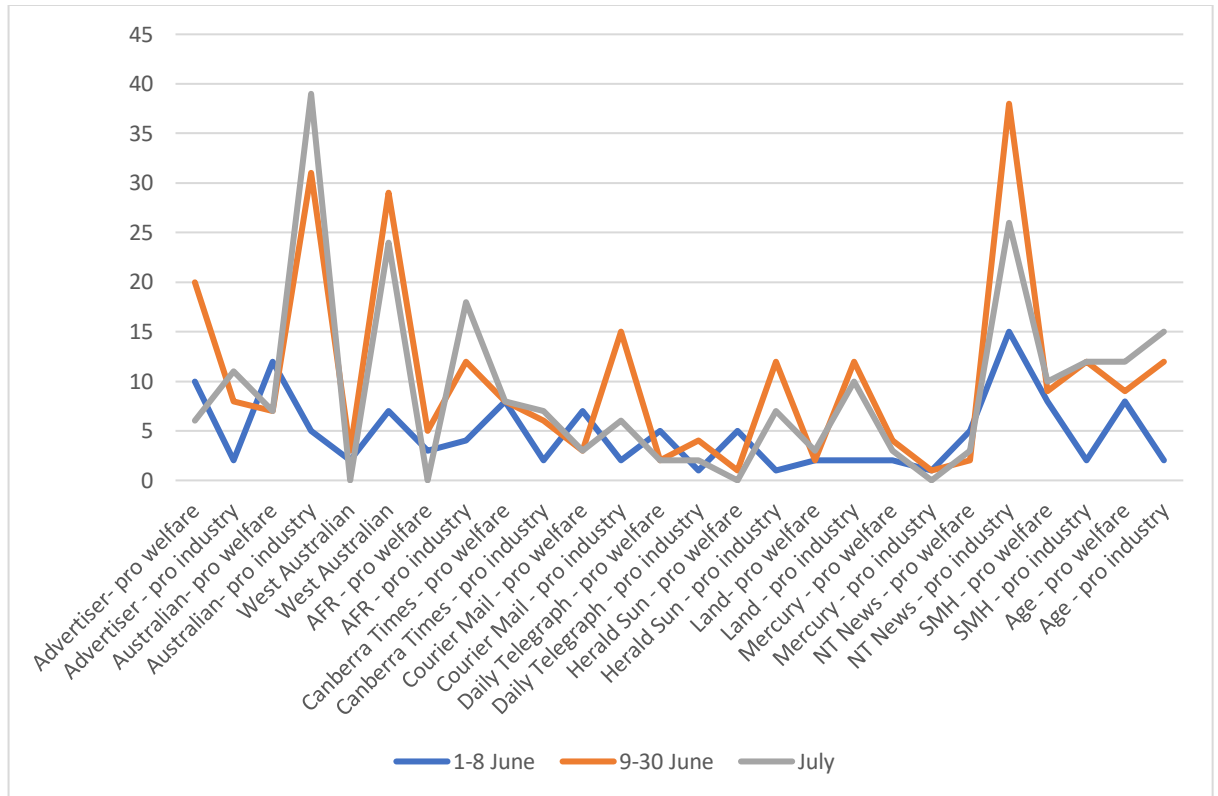


Figure 23: Number of articles by masthead that were pro welfare and pro industry in their reporting.

Evidence collated via the use of the database Parlinfo showed that there were 210 articles published in the newspapers in this study sample during the month of July, and within these articles there was a distinct change in the tone of the copy. This change was driven by the resumption of trade that occurred on 6 July 2011. Media and public interest into live export had declined substantially due to several factors, not least of all was yet another policy shift by the Labor government that saw the lifting of the trade ban as evident in Figure 23 above. According to Munro (2014), the suddenness of the resumption of trade was, in part, due to the inability of the animal welfare campaigners to find a balance between emotion and persuasion.

By the beginning of July, the villains of the narrative were the Labor government and the Minister for Agriculture. An example of the mood around

parliament was reflected in a story that ran on 2 July, under the headline “Ludwig’s mess like a red rag to the Rudd bull” (Rout, 2011d). Reading this article, it is obvious that the journalist had close connections within the Labor party. She cites tensions between Rudd and Ludwig and with Ludwig being a Gillard supporter, such analysis was not surprising. The suggestion of inside knowledge that comes from within the content of the article illustrates leaking of information coming from within the government and goes further to substantiate the needy relationship that exists between journalists and politicians, as disclosed in the writings of Johnson-Cartee (2005), Fitzgerald (2008) and Dunlop (2013). These academic writers acknowledge the necessity of the interdependence of the relationship between journalist and politician. In interview, Journalist A said:

For some, the way it works is that you may get taken for a nice dinner by the pollie, say at the Ottoman [Canberra restaurant] and a nice bottle of red and in a week or two there would be the expectation that a nice piece about them or their department appears in the paper.¹⁴⁵

This point was repeated by other interviewees questioned for this research paper who worked in the media and helps to inform the findings discussed in Chapter Nine.¹⁴⁶

By July, evidence indicates the outrage over the footage shown on the *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program had largely dissipated and emphasis in the media was focused on the cattle producers being the victims of the crisis. During July, stories were appearing of the plight of the cattle workers, their families and the destruction of an agricultural industry. The impact of the ban on the trucking business, rural contractors, aerial mustering companies and station hands was being articulated; so too was the detrimental impact that the ban was having on the indigenous communities in the northern part of Australia, who rely heavily on the trade. The first week of the month was also filled with stories of the government’s compensation package; but with little support for the government’s monetary offer being shown from the farming community. The headline, “\$30m package chook

¹⁴⁵ Journalist A.

¹⁴⁶ Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D; Parliamentary media adviser B.

feed, says cattle farmers” (Salna, 2011), ran in the *Canberra Times* with articles under similar headlines running across all Fairfax mastheads on 1 July (Coorey, 2011d; Dillion, 2011; Hockley, 2011b; Madigan, 2011; Willingham, 2011d). Simultaneously, *The Australian* ran a story under the headline “Cattlemen want answers as Ludwig makes \$30m pitch” (Owens, 2011), while the *AFR*’s Laura Tingle wrote that the “extra assistance fails to douse cattle farmers’ fury” (Tingle, 2011a). According to Journalist B in an interview: “The story was definitely that the cattle producers didn’t think the compensation offer was near enough. In fact, they were talking class action.”¹⁴⁷

The lifting of the ban on 6 July 2011 occurred far sooner than had been anticipated by the activists, industry and the press. There were suggestions by two of the politicians interviewed for this research¹⁴⁸ that Ludwig lifted the ban to prevent Rudd putting his political stamp on the deal and taking credit for restoring the trade, given that he was due to arrive in Indonesia on 8 July. According to Labor politician B: “The ban was lifted before Kevin managed to get airborne for Indonesia.”¹⁴⁹

However, Indonesia delayed announcing the number of import permits until 9 July, which did coincide with Rudd’s visit. As a result, the major dailies published pictures of Rudd standing beside his Indonesian counterparts under headlines such as “K-Rudd is King of the Cowboys” according to the *NT News* (2011); “Rudd Saved the Day,” said the *Adelaide Advertiser* (2011); while *The Australian* ran a story “Pioneer pins hopes on Rudd over ‘that bloody Ludwig’” (Barrass, 2011c; Rout, 2011e). According to Labor politician B: “If you looked at the pictures you saw Rudd in Indonesia, a lot of shaking hands and smiles. When you saw Ludwig in Indonesia, he [Ludwig] looked drawn and sullen.”¹⁵⁰

According to Labor politician A, Rudd’s diplomatic skills and reputation across Asia were the reason behind the trade resuming, saying: “If Kevin had not

¹⁴⁷ Journalist B

¹⁴⁸ Labor politician C; Labor politician A.

¹⁴⁹ Labor politician B.

¹⁵⁰ Labor politician B.

contacted his Indonesian counterparts, the industry would have remained in turmoil for a long time. The agriculture ministers were at an impasse and Rudd broke through.”¹⁵¹ Confirmation that this opinion was also floating in the corridors of the Canberra press gallery was established by the four press gallery journalists interviewed for this study.¹⁵² But they questioned the veracity of the claim that the deal struck between Indonesia and Australia was wholly due to the politicians. Industry spokesperson A also questioned Rudd’s role in securing the beginning of trading, being quick to point out that without the diplomatic efforts occurring behind the scenes, the ban would not have been lifted, saying: “The politician likes to claim all the credit, but really it was [the work of the bureaucrats] what was going on behind the scenes that made the difference.”¹⁵³

Journalist B made the point in interview that the bureaucrats are often the ones that are at the heart of the negotiations; the difference being that public servants, as opposed to elected officials, are not able to claim credit or speak publicly. In interview he said: “While policy is the domain of the politician, it is up to the bureaucrat to make it work.”¹⁵⁴ One Labor politician, interviewed for this thesis, believed that Rudd was being given too much credit for his work during the crisis and that there were other policy factors that were at play, saying: “The government had a carbon tax announcement to make and it was really hard to get any air with the amount of noise that cattle was taking up. We really wanted to move on.”¹⁵⁵ There was no denial that the ban “backflip,” as reported widely in the media, took many Labor politicians by surprise (Coorey, 2011e; Grattan; 2011e; Hockley, 2011d; “Labor MPs stunned by ban backflip”, 2011; Michael, 2011b; Tingle, 2011b). The turnaround had the Queensland branch of the AMIEU announcing that they would withdraw their financial support to the federal Labor party,¹⁵⁶ and a letter signed by 11 backbenchers sent to Gillard, outlining their discontent with the move to resume

¹⁵¹ Labor politician A.

¹⁵² Journalist A, Journalist B, Journalist C, Journalist D.

¹⁵³ Industry spokesperson A.

¹⁵⁴ Journalist B.

¹⁵⁵ Labor politician B.

¹⁵⁶ Labor politician B.

trade, was reported upon heavily after being leaked to news outlets (Bettles, 2011e; Crowe, 2011a; Hockley, 2011d; Willingham, 2011f;). According to Journalist B, the letter, which called for trade to only be resumed to those abattoirs that used pre-slaughter stunning, indicated that there was obvious and continued dissent in the Labor caucus. He said: “The lifting of the ban came with only two sitting days left. It happened suddenly and took everyone by surprise. Ludwig escaped a lot of parliamentary hurt by releasing it in the final days of parliament.”¹⁵⁷ This research thesis asserts, based on the evidence that has been considered, that timing is an imperative for advocates to impact and cause a policy change. The strategic and political emphasis on timing will be further discussed in Chapter Nine of this paper, providing insights for the communication and advocacy professions, by highlighting timing as an integral part of campaign planning.

The lifting of the trade ban to export live cattle to Indonesia did not please Animals Australia and the RSPCA. While their dissatisfaction with government was given lineage, it did not command front page (Willingham, 2011h). Some news outlets did report on calls from the animal activists for mandatory stunning (Bettles, 2011d, 2011e; Rout, 2011a). Labor politician B, a known supporter of mandatory stunning, said:

We almost had caucus agreeing to mandatory stunning for all abattoirs who wanted our cattle. This would have been made part of the regulatory process required and it wasn't that hard to do. At the last minute one of our numbers lost his nerve.¹⁵⁸

These articles ran as small news items in comparison to other articles that focused focus on the human cost, further evidence showing the focus of the argument regarding the resumption of the trade revolved around the cattle producers and the financial outlook for the industry. Prominent subjects within the newspaper coverage focused on the job losses that occurred due to the ban, the demands of the new government regulations over an already strained industry and an industry

¹⁵⁷ Journalist B.

¹⁵⁸ Labor politician A.

on the brink of ruin, with farmers having to shoot their stock (Johnston, 2011b; Rout, 2011f, 2011g; Willingham, 2011).

While the ban had been lifted on 6 July, no cattle left for Indonesia until August 2011 when new regulations on the abattoirs stipulated by the Australian government could be put in place (Stratham, 2011). Throughout the time when parliament was not sitting, between 6 July and mid-August, *The Australian* led the media coverage with a continued anti-government bent that focused on the ineptitude of the government in its handling of the financial assistance claims (via Centrelink), which was resulting in cattle producers laying off staff and struggling to feed their stock (Martin, 2011; Rout, 2011g, 2011f, 2011h).

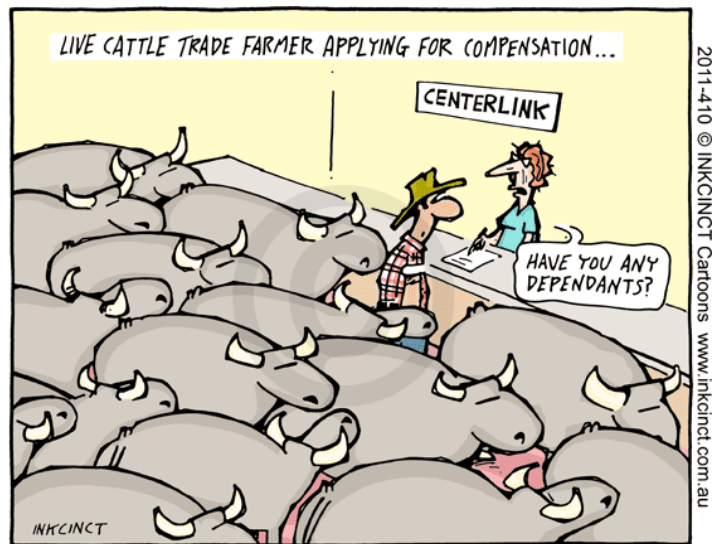


Figure 24: John Ditchburn, Live cattle trade farmer applying for compensation, *The Land*, 5 July 2011.

As expected, the three Labor politicians interviewed for this project supported the Labor government's financial assistance package and how it was being administered whereas the Coalition politicians spoke harshly as to the inability of the government to manage the process. As noted by Labor politician C:

By this stage there was nothing we could do that was right. The Oz [*The Australian*] hammered us, blaming us for how slow Centrelink was paying

out on assistance claims. But what they didn't say was that there was only a handful of claims that had been lodged in the low double figures.¹⁵⁹

Miranda Rout from *The Australian* continued to write on the financial impact of the live export crisis and broke the story that a "desperate farmer has begun shooting cattle stranded as a result of the live export crisis" (2011j). Evidence collated from within this research sample supports claims by Labor that Rupert Murdoch's newspapers were opposing the Gillard government on live export,¹⁶⁰ as evidenced by antagonistic headlines and the framing of the content (Barrass, 2011b, Dodd, 2011; Rout, 2011d; "Canberra cannot hide on cattle", 2011). It has been suggested that Murdoch's animosity for Gillard stemmed from Labor's policy decisions on pay-TV, the NBN as well as the carbon tax policy.¹⁶¹ According to Journalist C, once an editor of a metropolitan daily and now press gallery correspondent:

Some Murdoch papers supported Gillard in the early days, but the Oz [*The Australian*] was very much behind the Coalition to the point that they talked up Rudd. They [*The Australian*] ran an aggressive campaign trying to damage the independents, particularly Rob Oakeshott, all because Murdoch didn't like minority governments.¹⁶²

It was Gillard's alliance with the Greens that fuelled Murdoch's aggressive attack, saying on record that the Greens "should be destroyed at the ballot box" (Tiffen, 2010). In October 2010, Murdoch told a journalist that the "bloody Greens" were a clear threat to Australia's continued economic prosperity (Dusevic, 2010). Bob Carr, former premier of NSW and later Labor Foreign Minister (2012-13), said that once Labor had signed an agreement with the Greens, the Labor party battled with credibility issues, given the Greens' "unrealistic policies and economic irresponsibility" (Brown, 2014).

With Murdoch owning or co-owning a majority Australia's metropolitan dailies and Sunday newspapers, he wields enormous power in Australian politics. In

¹⁵⁹ Labor politician C

¹⁶⁰ Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C

¹⁶¹ Labor politician B.

¹⁶² Journalist C.

four of Australia's eight state and territory capitals, the Murdoch press holds an effective monopoly. Given the tone of the articles emanating from the Murdoch press were obviously pro-industry, it is no wonder that the PR consultant employed by the industry used these papers as gateways for the pro-live export messaging.

Following the resumption of the trade, the majority of the conversation regarding live export being played out in the media focused heavily on the cost of the ban to the farming community (Coorey, 2011f; Stratham, 2011). Industry spokesperson A said:

Once we got the green light there were still a few hoops to go through to make sure that companies were compliant with the new regulations. It wasn't as if the ban was lifted on Monday and the boats left on Tuesday.

There was a lot of cattle producers in a world of hurt.¹⁶³

This sentiment continued to be reflected in the newspapers (Austin, 2011b; Prior, 2011; Rout, 2011i) and was a message pushed by the PR consultant. He said:

What we didn't want was the Australian public to think that it was all rosy and that producers were just raking in the money. For many, their cattle had breached the export weight requirements, which meant they couldn't go to Indo [Indonesia].¹⁶⁴

The export of live sheep and goats for slaughter also gained some attention (Rout, 2011h; Willingham, 2011g) with proactive moves by the industry being taken to avert a similar fate for farmers of sheep and goats as what occurred to the cattle industry. According to Industry spokesperson B: "In so many ways this [the ban] was a wake-up call for the entire industry – not just cattle."¹⁶⁵

Chapter summary

By examining the textual evidence from newspaper articles and contrasting this with the interviews specially undertaken for this thesis, there is a plethora of evidence to support the proposition that the *Four Corners* program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011), had an impact upon Labor's live export policy in 2011.

¹⁶³ Industry spokesperson A.

¹⁶⁴ PR consultant.

¹⁶⁵ Industry spokesperson B.

The extensive media attention immediately after the broadcast of the program exposed a narrative that evolved as time progressed, from one that had animal welfare at the forefront of the coverage, before economic concerns and the cattle producers became the focus of the media coverage. The discord within the Labor government and the political tensions between those who supported Rudd and those who were backing Gillard was evident in the reporting of the political environment.¹⁶⁶

The effect of the ban on Australia's reputation as a reliable source of food for Indonesia and the impact on the Australian-Indonesian relationship were reported widely, with conservatively aligned mastheads more critical of the government in their commentary. Coalition politicians were scathing in their condemnation of the Labor government's seeming disregard for the effect the ban had on other trade and business confidence. Control of the narrative overtook the animal activists, with the industry now in control. This is supported by evidence of media priming by the industry, and who used visual framing to their benefit.

The following chapter considers the response to the live export crisis by the politicians, using the parliament as a vehicle for discourse.

¹⁶⁶ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C

Chapter Eight:

Evidence and discussion – the Parliament



Figure 25: Peter Nicholson, 'Cowcus has put a ban on Indonesia', *The Australian*, 9 June 2011.

The *Four Corners* program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011), provided a trigger for live export to appear on the public and political agenda and this thesis asserts that other drivers besides the media influenced the decision makers. This chapter considers the role that the parliament played in changing policy and makes observations on how politicians used the parliament as a vehicle to voice their stance on the trade. The government backbench and the opposition referred to the visual imagery from the ABC *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) and used their emotional reactions to prime the media to report their views.

Journalist D said that in all her many years of working in the press gallery she had never seen politicians speak on an issue with such emotion.¹⁶⁷ While this may in fact be true, this emotion does not appear to be sustained in the news coverage of the issues during the time frame considered in this research. In contrast, this study supports a hypothesis that parliamentary activity on live export was significantly increased due to the exposure of the cruelty in Indonesian abattoirs on *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011), but that the issue commanded attention for a short period of time. This finding is consistent with previous research that the media priming effect fades over time (Arendt, 2013)

The *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011), went to air when the House of Representatives was sitting, and the Senate was in Senate Estimates. It is the House that gains most of the media attention, mainly because that is where the Prime Minister sits, and because of Question Time. Question Time is considered by some politicians to be the most important time within the parliamentary schedule, due to it being the only time that is easily accessible for the public via ABC telecast and the occasional soundbite that may be regurgitated via the print and broadcast media, thanks to the press gallery journalists being in attendance. Coalition politician B said in an interview:

You wait until about 11am to hear if you have been given a question. There aren't that many so it's a bit like your moment in the sun for the day. There can be heckling and jibing too which can add to the atmosphere.¹⁶⁸

Labor politician A agreed saying: “It may not be the most substantial thing that we do, but showing the sides of politics being adversarial and at each other is what some of the public expect.”¹⁶⁹ But Journalist C suggests that often the public forget that Question Time is staged and does not help with the public's wider relationship with politicians in general, saying in an interview:

¹⁶⁷ Journalist D.

¹⁶⁸ Coalition politician B.

¹⁶⁹ Labor politician A.

Usually it is nothing but entertainment, doing little more than recite the lines of the day that have been emanating from within the Prime Minister's press office. It can be full of aggression and heat; but it is questionable whether there is a lot of substance. And they [the politicians] behave like spoilt brats.¹⁷⁰

According to Chris Berg, a research fellow with the Institute of Public Affairs:

Question Time is farcical because it is an empty ritual. It adds nothing. It distracts the press gallery. It distracts our politicians. It undermines the more serious work that goes on in [the] Parliament. It is divorced from the actual business of government, the actual business of legislation, and the practical needs of democratic accountability (Berg, 2015).

Gallery stalwart journalist Katherine Murphy, writing in *The Age*, agrees that the:

... long parliamentary winter recess brings one significant benefit. The country is temporarily spared the banal and pointless spectacle of Question Time. There is no more grinding and time-wasting ritual in federal politics than the rubbish inflicted on the public between the hours of 2pm and 3.30pm (2011).

Murphy continues that, in its current form, Question Time:

symbolises everything that's wrong with political discussion in Australia — an exchange of manufactured sound bites and confected television moments signifying nothing at all. It is at once uncomfortably aggressive, spiteful and gladiatorial, and completely soporific (Murphy, 2011).

Aside from all the criticism of Question Time, the one thing that it does do is focus on the issues that make it on the political agenda for that day and is consistent with news values and priming theory

Consulting the *Hansard* transcript for Question Time on 31 May 2011, the day following the *Four Corners* program, live export was first raised by Queensland's Bob Katter MP, the independent Member for Kennedy, as the sixth question. He asked:

¹⁷⁰ Journalist C.

... can the Minister [Ludwig] assure the House of more humane processing in the three South-East Asian meatworks media targeted yesterday? Could the Minister further assure the House that we are not going to impose our religious beliefs and values on our neighbours? Is the Minister aware that an estimated one-third of Indonesian people go to bed hungry every night?

But these people are not allowed to fish in our waters nor prawn farm our empty land, and an ox processed in Australia costs \$7,500, precluding purchase by any Indonesian. In light of this, Minister, wouldn't they be entitled to say, "Fair go, mate"? Could the Minister advise, since it will no longer pay to provide water and feed, how our nature lovers intend to deal with cattle now dying? Could the Minister finally advise these people parading as nature lovers to watch the worldwide nature program *National Geographic*, whose advertisement is of one animal ripping another to pieces (Katter, 2011)?

In his multi layered question, Katter clearly identified Australia as playing a role in providing food to Indonesia, not in passing judgements on what occurs in another country based on Australian values. He touched on the hypocrisy of the animal welfare supporters who put animals before people.

While Katter did not specially refer to the *Four Corners* program, Labor's Tony Burke MP responded on behalf of Ludwig with a direct reference to the ABC program saying:

It is also true that the reason that this debate has taken off in such a way over the last 24 hours is that the footage that was on television last night was just awful. I felt that watching it, I am sure every Australian felt that, and I am sure every farmer felt that as well. I note the comments that have been made by the New South Wales Farmers Association already about the distress that many of their members have felt in seeing their own stock treated in the way that we saw last night at a number of establishments. The footage was only made available to the Minister for Agriculture shortly before that program went to air. In that time, a number of actions have been taken and shortly before we went to Question Time the Minister for

Agriculture provided a detailed media conference where he went through the gravity of what had been sighted and also the specific actions which he had already undertaken and further actions which he has left the way open for.

Suffice to say of those specific establishments that have been involved and have been seen in that footage that Australian farmers do expect that their stock will be treated better than that. The Australian people expect that animals originating from Australia will be treated better than that, and the actions taken thus far by the minister have centred on those specific establishments (Burke, 2011).

In his response Burke made the distinct link with “awful” images seen in the program and the actions of the government taken against the trade. He also referenced the distress caused to farmers in seeing their stock being poorly treated. This is a clear illustration of the effect that visual framing had on the politicians. During the session Janelle Saffin, Labor’s Member for Page, asked the second question on live export, which served as little more than a lead into a description of the actions taken by the Labor government (Burke, 2011).

It was not until 14 June that live export was again raised in Question Time, when Abbott, asked of the Prime Minister:

I refer the Prime Minister to the suspension of the live cattle trade with Indonesia and the unfolding disaster that this entails for cattle producers across Northern Australia. Is the Prime Minister prepared to meet with me, urgently, so that we can work together on a bipartisan basis to re-open this trade as soon as possible, at least for those Indonesian abattoirs that already fully meet Australian standards (Abbott, 2011b)?

Interestingly, this call from the opposition for a bipartisan approach was not reported in the media until 27 June, (Minus, 2011; Peake, 2011), reflective of news values focusing on a crisis. According to Parliamentary media adviser B, these media articles only appeared because of a media release from Abbott’s office that

coincided with his visit to the North and subsequent photo opportunities, and not because of what was said in parliament.¹⁷¹

On 7 July, one day after the ban was lifted, there were two questions on live export, the first made by Rob Mitchell, Labor's Member for McEwen, who asked:

My question is to the Prime Minister. How is the government working to secure a sustainable future for the nation's live animal export industry? How is yesterday's decision to lift the suspension on live exports accompanied by strong protections for animal welfare? (Mitchell, 2011).

The question allowed the Prime Minister to lay out the latest policy in front of the parliament and other onlookers such as the media, industry, activists and the public.

Press gallery journalists use parliamentary speeches as a source of material for copy. As stated by Ericson, Baranek and Chan, the news media are "an institution for the collection, storage and dissemination of all kinds of information from hundreds of different microsystems that exist" (1987, p. 15) of which parliamentary debate is one. Evidence collected shows that press gallery journalists tend to use the comments made by the political front players, in this instance ministers and senior opposition figures, but not those of the average backbencher, unless the backbencher makes a controversial comment, such as George Christensen's comments previously referred to in Chapter Six. But it is apparent by viewing the research in this study sample that politicians gain more exposure via the mainstream media than they do when given the opportunity to expand on an important matter of policy or public importance in the House or the Senate. While there is no doubt that an interview replicated in the newspaper would reach a bigger audience, a brief interview cannot replace the subtlety and complexity of the deliberative process that makes up the parliament. Eminent American journalism critic, Walter Lippmann, said: "The press is no substitute for institutions. It is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision" (1922, p. 197).

Question Time is not the only opportunity for politicians to use the mechanics of the parliament to raise an issue of importance, and evidence collated

¹⁷¹ Parliamentary media adviser B.

for this research shows that politicians used adjournment debates and constituent statements for media priming to bring the live export crisis to the political agenda. According to Coalition politician B, part of the reason that politicians speak in parliament is about being seen to be doing something and making sure that the concerns of those who voted for them are being heard in Canberra. He said:

When I give a speech in Parliament, I make sure I put it out on social media. And, depending on the issue, I send out a media release which will be picked up by my local paper. It is so I can tell the people that I represent that I am telling Canberra what is happening in our part of the world.¹⁷²

Given the distance from the electorate, Canberra can appear to be a place that is out of touch. Labor politician A agrees, saying:

Too often I am asked what I do in Canberra. Canberra is such an unrealistic environment and not something that many can relate to. Making use of the speeches and appearances in parliament are important tools in letting those who voted for me – and even those who don't – know that I am working on their behalf.¹⁷³

Coalition politician B said that he tried to speak on as many debates as possible in a move to raise his profile within the party, as much as showing those in his electorate that he was working at being an effective MP. He said:

Getting on the record is important, that is why being on Hansard means so much. If something happens in the electorate and I get the opportunity to speak, then being able to send them a copy of the Hansard is a powerful tool. It stays on the record forever.¹⁷⁴

In the context of events occurring during parliament's 2011 autumn session, there was a limited window for the live export crisis to be heard in the chambers, with the House of Representatives and the Senate sitting for only 14 days before breaking for the long winter recess.

¹⁷² Coalition politician B.

¹⁷³ Labor politician A.

¹⁷⁴ Coalition politician B.

On the evening of 30 May, Melissa Parke MP, Member for Fremantle and a long-time live export opponent, delivered a grievance debate in the Federation Chamber. In this address she says:

This evening, one of Australia's most respected current affairs programs, *Four Corners*, has aired further evidence of Australian cattle being the subject of brutal and savage treatment, this time in Indonesia. What makes the footage in this case particularly distressing, and also particularly compelling as part of the argument against the live export trade, is the casual and clearly unexceptional nature of the cruelty meted out to Australian cattle and the fact that it is occurring through the use of slaughtering infrastructure and methods that have been provided to these Indonesian abattoirs by LiveCorp and Meat and Livestock Australia (Parke, 2011a).

This speech was delivered at 9.29 pm, minutes after the conclusion of the *Four Corners* program; however, the action of listing her name on the speaking list with the Whips Office for that evening demonstrates forward planning, and this paper contends that this formed the first step in an all-encompassing strategic plan on behalf of the anti-live export advocates to change policy. It should be noted that Parke has never denied being privy to the contents of the program before it was aired publicly. Outlining the next move by the advocates, the MP said:

Tomorrow morning, every MP and Senator will be hand-delivered the evidence Animals Australia gathered in Indonesia and a scientific assessment of that evidence by RSPCA Australia. The information will contain a critique of the live export industry action plan. I encourage all members to view and assess the material and to consider seriously whether we can in good conscience allow this kind of conduct to go on year after year, ship after ship, terrified animal after terrified animal (Parke, 2011a).

Her address was emotive, using terminology such as “appallingly violent”, “painful”, and even “torturous, brutal and savage”, and laying blame clearly on industry. She called for live export to be phased out in favour of an expanded boxed beef industry and said that “will provide a better economic outcome, a better jobs outcome and the humane treatment of animals” (Parke, 2011a).

On 2 June, three days following the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), Parke presented a petition, sent to her by Animals Australia, to the House of Representatives with 40,650 signatures. Using the Statements by Members as a tool to raise awareness, she had 90 seconds to make the statement to Chamber. Again, these speaking spots are highly sought after, and it would have necessitated planning, or swapping with another, to ensure that she had a slot. She said that the signatures formed part of “more than 300,000 signatures gathered by animal welfare groups across the country even before this week's shocking report on ABC's *Four Corners* program” (Parke, 2011b).

There is clear evidence to support assertions that the live export issue appeared on the political agenda due to the media and the mobilisation of the public sphere as discussed in Chapter Five (Habermas, 1989). As reported in Question Time on 2 June 2011, Burke MP said, “... the reason that this debate has taken off in such a way over the last 24 hours is that the footage that was on television last night was just awful” (Burke, 2011). Burke’s response also outlined the government’s actions in suspending live animal exports to the facilities, which were identified by *Four Corners*. But he also flagged that this was the government’s initial response and clearly left the door open to “add further facilities to the banned list in the future if required” (Burke, 2011). Not one member of the House crossed the floor to vote with the other side, neither for nor against the trade. According to Labor politician C, the Party Whips were very busy making sure there was not dissent in the ranks, saying:

... after the conversation about the trade became more about the money and the livelihood of Australians, it became more and more important to keep firm and keep saying what the party leaders wanted us to say. This was a far less emotive argument. The horror of what was happening to the cattle – how could you defend that?¹⁷⁵

It was in the Senate that the live export trade received an extended hearing and where the *Hansard* transcripts show the emotion previously referred to by Journalist C in this chapter. Unlike the House of Representatives, the Senate was

¹⁷⁵ Labor politician C.

not sitting when the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) went to air, but when it resumed on 14 June 2011, the sessions focused on live export. While the Senate has a Question Time, it does not attract the media's attention on a regular basis. In contrast to the lower house, senators can ask supplementary questions and expand upon topics raised. Out of the eight Questions Without Notice, six were directed to Ludwig. In these encounters, he was constantly on the defensive. An example is the questioning by the Senator from the Northern Territory and Deputy Leader of the Nationals, Nigel Scullion, who asked: "Has the Minister ever visited a working Indonesian abattoir?" (Scullion, 2011) to which Ludwig replied: "No, I have not visited a working Indonesian abattoir. Can I say, though, that the government is determined to reform the live animal export industry, unlike those opposite, who seem stuck in the past" (Ludwig, 2011). Meanwhile, Senator Joyce made direct reference to the *Four Corners* program by asking Ludwig, "... you would be aware that, even in the *Four Corners* report, some of the abattoirs in Indonesia are already using standards commensurate with Australian practice, yet we have banned live exports even to them" (Joyce, 2011b).

Labor Senator Mark Furner also quoted the program, saying:

I will never forget the images. One part of the footage showed an Indonesian man belting a cow with chains. I do not know what the purpose behind that was, but that sort of behaviour really troubled me. It has been suggested here today that we have acted on this issue as a result of an email campaign or that there were delayed responses from the government. I do not think that is the case (Furner, 2011).

Opposition speakers spoke of Ludwig being: "cowed into submission ... what has changed is that we have seen a TV program, and that TV program and the resultant swelling of well-intentioned support in the community has cowed this government into suspension" (Fisher, 2011).

Similarly to the House of Representatives, senators spoke along party lines with WA Liberal Senator, Chris Back, calling the ban, "a knee-jerk reaction to an ill-considered email campaign by activists who knew little about the consequences of what they were doing or indeed the animal welfare issues that they will subject Australian cattle to" (Back, 2011). Labor senators were seen supporting Ludwig's

policy decisions, such as the ALP Senator from Tasmania, Senator Carol Brown, who is quoted in Hansard as saying that, “Far from condemning the Minister, those opposite should join with the government in congratulating Minister Ludwig on the actions that he has taken thus far” (Brown, 2011). As mentioned previously, both sides of the political divide and the Greens used the *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program as a point of reference saying that the program was “pretty compelling” (Siewart, 2011). However, the attitude of some politicians was that live animal exports are regarded as an issue that “was a flash in the pan” according to Coalition politician B.¹⁷⁶

Two private Senator Bills were introduced into the Senate, one on 15 June by Greens Senator, Rachel Siewart, and another on 20 June by Nick Xenophon, the independent Senator from South Australia. Both bills were referred to the Senate Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report. These bills, like the Private Member’s Bill tabled in the House of Representatives by Andrew Willkie, were not passed; however, these did serve to generate debate and offered opportunity for senators have their arguments and policy position recorded on Hansard.

It was expected that research into the parliamentary process would reveal that politicians representing constituencies affected by the ban would be more prolific in the use of parliamentary debate; however, research revealed the number of urban and metropolitan politicians who spoke out against the ban was also sizeable. This includes politicians from Tasmania, metropolitan Melbourne and Sydney. Andrew Leigh MP, Member for Fraser in the ACT, used an adjournment debate on 14 June to illustrate how the:

... image of our stock men and women is deeply etched on the national psyche: the laconic stockman rocking easily in the saddle, cajoling and guiding the herd; the alert and agile stockman darting through the bush, bringing a bolter back or displaying camp drafting skills at the local rodeo (Leigh, 2011).

¹⁷⁶ Coalition politician B.

Quoting Banjo Patterson's poem "With the Cattle" (1896) Leigh referred to the interference of "pundits" or experts using the mass media to disseminate their message and for igniting an argument that pitches "city versus country, Bondi versus Barcaldine, naive animal lovers versus heartless farmers" (Leigh, 2011).

Leigh also spoke of the 500 emails his office received over two weeks and used this to illustrate that the live export issue was not one that just touched producers, but also those in the urban centres who were concerned about animal welfare while wanting a sustainable cattle industry. This point is supported by Coalition politician B:

You had some [anti-live export campaigners] that wanted the trade to end but in reality, I think that was in the minority and came from a fragment of the population that think their piece of topside comes direct from the supermarket. The majority of Australians, in the city and the country, just wanted the cattle to be well treated. That was it.¹⁷⁷

Evidence indicates that there is a greater proportion of speeches in parliament that use the media as a point of reference and conduit in the instance of the live export crisis than that of the media using the parliamentary speeches as a source for material as shown in Figure 26 below and Figure 27 on the following page.

¹⁷⁷ Coalition politician B.

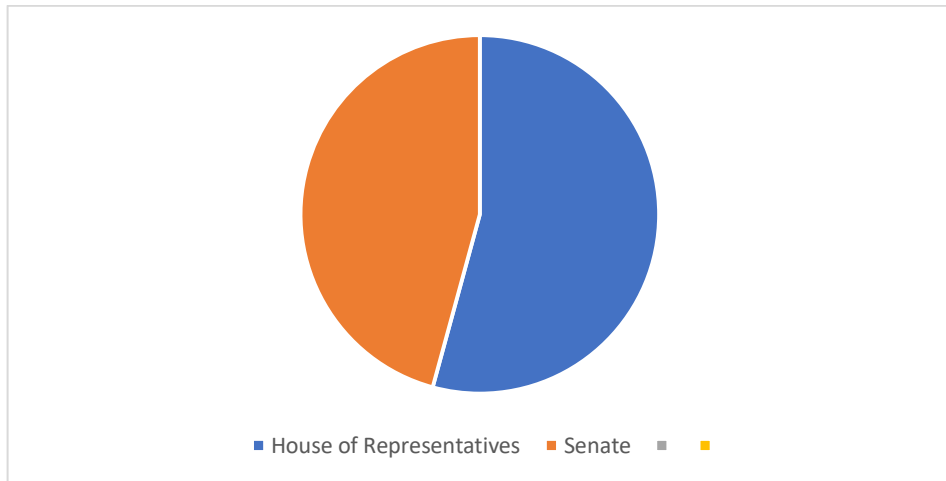


Figure 26: Proportion of parliamentary speeches on live export referencing the media as source June- July 2011.

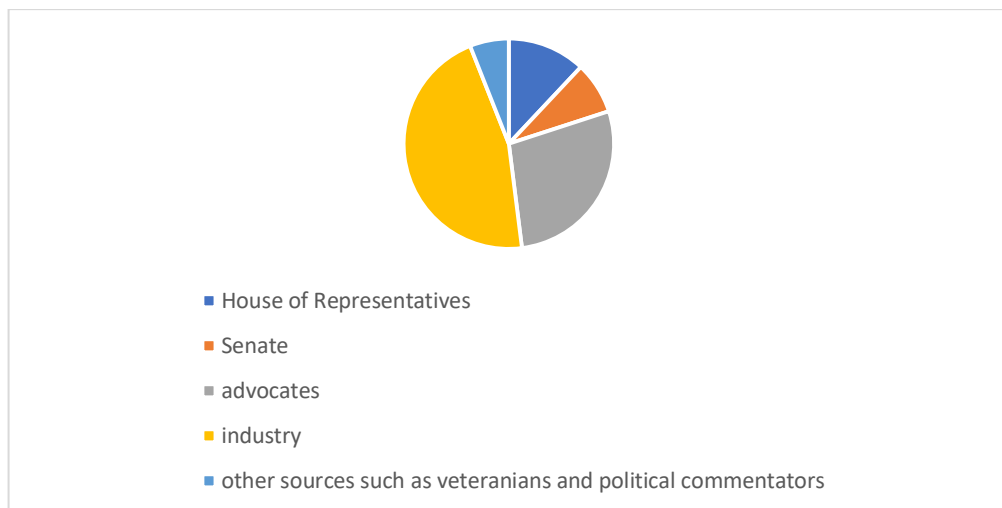


Figure 27: Proportion of sources for content appearing in newspaper articles on live export June- July 2011.

Evidence shows that newspaper articles tended to quote those politicians that held an executive position such as the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition or Minister for Agriculture. An example is Steven Scott of the *Courier-Mail* writing on 15 June 2011 that “Opposition leader Tony Abbott told Parliament that the ban was creating an ‘unfolding disaster’ for cattle producers across Northern Australia” (Scott, 2011a). This indicates that controversy and conflict are the news values that the media are attaching to the story (Caple, 2018).

However, in *The Land*, whose name reflects the principle behind the paper and serves to indicate the location of the paper's target audience, the newspaper's press gallery journalist used speeches made in parliament on the live export crisis prolifically. One such example was published on 23 June 2011 in which Colin Bettles quoted Senator Siewart and independent Andrew Wilkie MP from Hansard, adding to the story with quotes from a press conference and an interview with Tasmanian Liberal Senator Richard Colbeck before concluding with quotes from the RSPCA (Bettles, 2011d). However, by the end of the first week in July, reference to all parliamentary debate ceased to appear within newspaper copy due to the politicians being on winter recess and back in their electorates.

It is apparent within this study that similarly to the reaction within the media, the visual imagery generated a strong emotional response within the parliament, as the language within the speech's attests. Reflective of Barthes's (1977) conceptualisation of significance and suggestion, the intent of the images was to evoke emotion within a news story and add to the facilitation of understanding the message that the animal welfare advocates wanted to convey.

The independents

There is evidence within this study from both newspaper articles and interviews from respondents that the precarious nature of the Labor-led hung parliament, had an influence on behaviour and alliances within parliament which were in turn played out through the media. Evidence collated for this study does highlight an anomaly in the anecdotal rhetoric that surrounded the hung parliament that placed the independents at the heart of decision-making and in particular the roles played by Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor.¹⁷⁸ While there is no dispute that the Greens had significant power, given that they held the balance of power in the Senate and entered a deal with Labor to vote as a block, the role of the two regional independents, Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor, is limited as evident from the lack of mention in the newspaper articles and within the transcripts as recorded by interviewees. Instead, the media criticised the lack of action by Windsor,

¹⁷⁸Coalition politician A; Journalist B; Journalist C.

particularly his voting against a motion put to the upper house by Katter, which would have “delivered stun guns to Indonesian abattoirs and ensured then speedy resumption of the live cattle trade” (Devine, 2011b). Given that Windsor’s rural electorate represents one of the largest cattle electorates in the country, his lack of support for the trade was highly visible within his community.¹⁷⁹ Journalist A said:

To this day I do not understand why he didn’t vote with Katter. Sure, he interjected Wilkie but he is on the record as voting with the government and against the people that put him where he was. He must have had a bigger game plan, but I have no idea what that was.¹⁸⁰

During the live export crisis, there was evidence that the independents who did command media attention consistently were Nick Xenophon in the Senate from South Australia, and Tasmania’s Andrew Wilkie, the upper house Member for Denison, neither representing constituencies that are producers of cattle for live export to Indonesia (Senator aims to ban live export, 2011). The rise in prominence of the independents and the backbench because of the minority government provided them with news value in the eyes of the news media. Wilkie together with Victoria’s Adam Bandt from the Greens, introduced a Private Members Bill into the House of Representatives calling for the complete ban of live cattle exports to Indonesia by 2014 (Caldwell, 2011; Wilkie push to ban live exports, 2011). While the bill failed due to Labor voting with the opposition, certain MPs chose not to be in the chamber to avoid having to vote along party lines that were at odds with their conscience or the wishes of their electorate. According to Labor politician A:

There was no way that I could be a part of the vote that would continue the live export trade after seeing what we saw. I knew the Whip would ask questions, why I wasn’t there, but I simply could not be a part of the vote.¹⁸¹

Katter, whose northern Queensland electorate was deeply hurt by the ban, was vocal as would be expected in the pro-live export campaign. From Windsor and

¹⁷⁹ Journalist A.

¹⁸⁰ Journalist A

¹⁸¹ Labor politician A.

Oakeshott, there were no directly attributed quotes in newspaper articles within the research sample.

Chapter summary

This chapter considers the parliamentary discourse on the live export of cattle to Indonesia that occurred following the *ABC* program shown on *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011). While there was evidence of an emotive response from the politicians, this was not enough for them to vote against their party lines. While the backbench and independents were important to the trajectory of the Parliamentary debate, the two independents that were pivotal to the Labor party winning the 2010 election were strangely silent on the issue.

This chapter also shows how the press gallery journalists used parliamentary debate as a source of material for copy or to flesh out a story with a political angle while adding to the dramatic narrative and enhancing its news value (Caple, 2018; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017). The following chapter will interpret the evidence that this study considers and outline seven findings that answer the research question of what influences federal government policy relevant to the Australian agricultural sector, in particular the live export market, and what are the global implications.

Evidence showed that the dominant frame within parliamentary speeches shifted from welfare to trade dependent upon the political persuasion of the speaker, with Labor and the independents speaking on welfare, while the conservative Liberal and National representatives in the parliament focused on the fiscal implications. It is clear by reviewing the news media that although the priming effects of the advocacy campaign were short, the news of the debates contributed to damaging Australia's trading reputation.

Chapter Nine:

Findings and the interpretation of the data

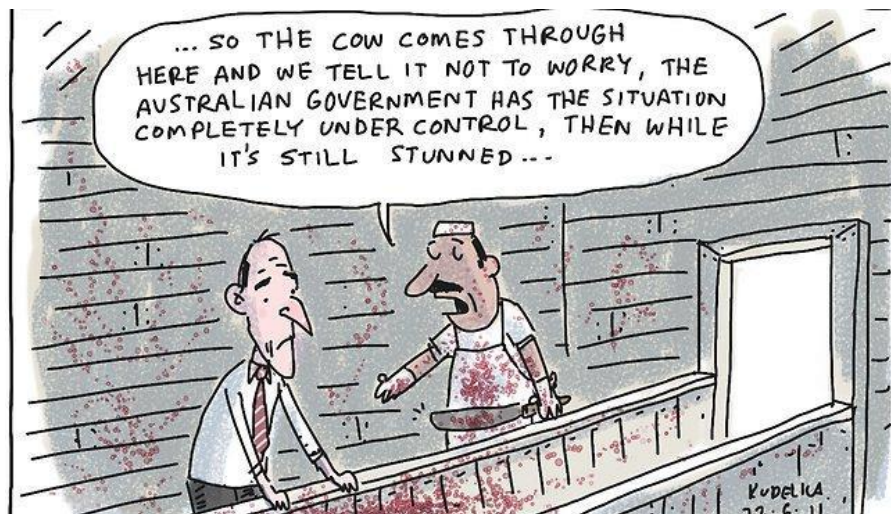


Figure 28: Jon Kudelka, 'It's all under control,' *The Australian*, 22 June 2011.

The Professional Doctorate is primarily concerned with development of professional practice. This thesis makes a contribution to the development of practice in both journalism and advocacy to government by using the live export industry as a case study. The primary focus of the thesis is the interrelation among the various stakeholders that coexist in how they converge to forge policy change. It is proposed by the study that the insights gained from outlining the theoretical concepts at play, the content of how the phenomena was described in the press and how this related to the 'lived' experience of journalism professionals associated with phenomenon will contribute original knowledge to professional practice. Such accounts from which to draw from, specifically as related to live exports, do not

exist and as such as this case study informs those who currently practice in this domain.

Numerous themes as shown in Figure 17 on page 127 of this thesis, emerged from within the research, which help to develop a narrative that will provide an insight into policy development and what the influences are and how their influence is felt, with particular reference to the live export industry.

When discussing the findings of this research, there has been a natural tendency to want to expose something that may have been previously unknown. While during interviews and in the collation of a large amount of data, some previously unknown and unreported material was revealed, it is important to recall that this research paper was not a piece of investigative reporting. Instead, the purpose of this professional doctorate is to provide an evidence-based paper for informing practitioners and researchers which will better inform the practice of policy decision-making in a political environment. This study has examined 651 newspaper articles, transcripts from 83 parliamentary speeches and interviews with 17 respondents, who were integral to the live export crisis of 2011, as evidence to illustrate who influences policy decisions. The findings of this study will be further deconstructed in this chapter.

The findings of this research are not written as recommendations for the livestock industry. The aim of this study was not to serve as a blueprint for future action by those in live export; but, instead, to inform public relations professionals, journalists, advocates and researchers about factors shaping a policy shift.

It should also be said at this point that the events in the livestock industry in 2011 occurred within a period of Australian political history that was particularly unstable. There is irrefutable evidence that the animal activists deliberately exploited this opportunity, as indicated by their actions of bypassing the government and going straight to the media in their effort to get a response. As was said by RSPCA spokeswoman Lisa Chalk: "The government was prevented from seeing the footage because it had failed to act when shown similar evidence of past cruelty cases. Our fear was, if we showed it to them [Ludwig] he wouldn't have done anything" (Benson, 2011a, 2011b).

Evidence shows that in the case of the live export crisis of 2011, both the government and the live export industry failed to respond to events using crisis management strategies and media priming until it was too late. The multiple players within the agricultural sector splintered the response from producers and while industry groups paid handsomely for a PR consultant of some note to advise them prior to the airing of *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), they failed to act on his recommendations. Overwhelmingly, the industry's failure to recognise the rise of social media was a spectacular fiasco and one that has been addressed by industry, who are now active social media participants. They also learnt the benefits of speaking as one industry, with ALEC taking on a significant voice in the post-2011 media on live export as MLA shifted their positioning and distanced themselves from the politics of Canberra. There is no denying that the ESCAS safeguards put into force by the Gillard government subsequent to the events of 2011 have made substantial improvements to the slaughter practices in Indonesia and other export destinations, with a reported 93 per cent of abattoirs in Indonesia now stunning prior to slaughter (David Inall, CEO Cattle Council of Australia, in conversation, Canberra, 6 July 2012). This is quite apart from the overwhelming evidence that indicated Ludwig was fundamentally ill-equipped to deal with the unfolding crisis (Barrass, 2011c; Bettles, 2011d; Franklin, 2011c; Grattan, 2011c; Rout, 2011c, 2011d; Willingham; 2011e).¹⁸²

From the point of view of Animals Australia and the RSPCA, the anti-live export campaign can be claimed as a muted success. They succeeded in getting live export on the political and public agenda and they succeeded in getting a policy shift. While they may not be happy that the trade resumed within eight weeks after the ban was imposed, tightened procedures were in place. Therefore, for many reasons, this case study is a textbook case of how to be a successful advocate. What this study shows is that, while the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) shone a light on appalling behaviour and served as a trigger that started a national conversation begun by the animal welfare movement, the media was just one

¹⁸² Labor politician A; Labor politician B.

ingredient that made the Gillard government change a policy that affected an industry and impacted upon another nation's food supply.

The following findings have been based on assessing the collated evidence using characteristics of the transformative paradigm within which there is an interactive link between the researcher and the respondents, a countering of bias and a framework for research that incorporates social justice and a voice for the marginalised (Mertens, 1999). This thesis illustrates that the first marginalised group were the animal activists, until the narrative shifted and the marginalised became the live export industry.

Finding 1: A successful advocacy campaign needs the media and pre-planned timing

This study finds that what influences federal government policy relevant to the Australian agricultural sector, in particular the live export market, is a successful advocacy campaign that uses the media as a gatekeeper to disseminate the message, inform the public and place the issue onto the public and political agenda (Cole & Harcup, 2010; Grosheck & Tandoc, 2016; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). As found in this case study, deliberately using the media as a vehicle for the advocates' voice to be heard can facilitate change to occur. There is no doubt that by priming *Four Corners* as the deliverer of the message, the activists captured the attention of the mainstream mastheads across the country, which, in turn, informed the public as well as the political elite (Habermas, 1989). The media, in its varying forms, delivered the animal activists' agenda and, as the narrative progressed, the focus of the story changed and was used by the industry to change the policy outcomes. Although relatively new, the extent of social media usage by the animal activists following the airing of the *Four Corners* program could not be ignored by journalists in the social construction of the news on live export. The news debates influenced the decision makers (Caple, 2018; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017).

As a blueprint for future advocacy campaigns, this study finds that for a successful outcome, the media must be won over first and convinced that there is

merit in the campaign. Evidence finds that the media prefer to run with a story rife with conflict, which in turn drives their content. As was said in the interview by Journalist B: “It’s all very nice to go to the opening of a building, but if the building falls down, well that is a story.”¹⁸³ Findings of this research show that the way the individual journalist framed the story influenced the way that the audience interpreted the information, with themes emerging and a distinct narrative forming, as theoretically supported by a consideration of framing theory (Entman, 1993).

This study found that there was a distinct alliance between mastheads and political activists, with Murdoch’s News Corp unapologetically aligned with the conservative side of politics, questioning the notion of objectivity within journalism (Schudson, 1978). Murdoch’s comprehensive infiltration into the Australian media landscape by owning “70 per cent of the newspapers in this country” (Finkelstein, 2012) and his disdain for the Gillard government, unsurprisingly resulted in this study finding that the majority of articles that appeared in News Corp were anti-government and therefore pro-live export, pro-producers and pro-industry. Former editor-in-chief of NewsCorp in Melbourne, Bruce Guthrie said:

... in May 2011 Murdoch made it clear that he disliked minority governments and was more favourably disposed towards the leader of the opposition, Tony Abbott, than to the current prime minister. Shortly after the May gathering in Carmel Valley, News Corp’s newspapers began a more aggressive campaign directly against the Gillard government (Hobbs & McKnight, 2014, p. 5).

Therefore, this thesis finds that advocates who wish to use the media as a tool to change policy need to court the media that have similar alliances and political allegiances to gain maximum impact. As said in interview by Parliamentary media adviser B, who worked for the Gillard government: “I firmly believe that *The Australian* was so biased in their coverage that they mounted a ‘campaign’ against the policy rather than just covering it.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Journalist B.

¹⁸⁴ Parliamentary media adviser B.

According to the conception of the public sphere, the media may provide a valuable and effective means to inform both the public and decision makers. Some within advocacy believe that a campaign strategy that relies on mainstream, reporting rather than a paid public information campaign can appear more effective and legitimate when pursuing a policy shift (Harrison, 2011). According to the Animal activist A interviewed for this research: “We got more value and impact from what we did with the journalists in the gallery than we did with any of the paid campaigns.”¹⁸⁵ But the animal activists assuming their role as a marginal political actor within the narrative, lacking “definitional power” (Schlesinger, 1989) unlike traditional power elite, and needing to compensate their lack of status (McNair, 1995), selecting the correct journalist and establishing a co-dependent relationship is almost an imperative. This tactic was shown to be a successful strategy in the live export case study, where certain journalists were being given the material from one side or the other. According to Industry spokesperson B, this was deliberate, saying:

In the midst of the crisis, trying to win over a journo so that they will change their opinion wasn’t going to work, especially when they have already declared their position to an audience around the country. So, we talked to the journalists that we knew we could get a good hearing from and one that we knew.¹⁸⁶

All the respondents interviewed for this study accepted the role the media played as a disseminator of information (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). It would be fair to suggest the media were acting as expected given the position of the media within a democratic society, backed up by communications literature which identifies the significant role of media advocacy in setting the public agenda and influencing the direction of public opinion on social issues (Habermas, 1989). This study finds that interviewees who had a media background saw it as the media’s role to serve as a neutral watchdog on government (Norris, 2014), although many journalists initially

¹⁸⁵ Animal activist.

¹⁸⁶ Industry spokesperson B

cooperated with the advocacy campaign.¹⁸⁷

This study has found that a successful advocacy campaign relies on a strategy that involves extensive pre-planning and priming, as demonstrated by the campaign orchestrated by the animal activists to ban live exports in 2011. “It was the perfect storm,” according to the head of the RSPCA Heather Neill (in conversation, Parliament House, Canberra, 16 June 2015). The PR consultant employed by the industry said that there was ample evidence to show that the animal advocates had worked with Wilkie and Xenophon in the planning of the campaign saying:

Wilkie and Xenophon had clearly pre-planned this with Animals Australia who unfurled branded backdrops, unpacked colour media kits and who held a press conference, moments after the politicians had stopped. They were running the union line that more Australian jobs will be created if the cattle are slaughtered domestically, frozen and sent overseas. It’s entirely fallacious but seems credible to an ignorant media.¹⁸⁸

Airing the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) while the House of Representatives was sitting, and senators were in town for Senate Estimates was an important move. This meant that all the decision makers were in one place and easy to lobby and access. Also, being near the press gallery provided an immediate corridor into the nation’s mastheads. Identifying and working with politicians to ensure that they spoke in parliament on the issue was also imperative to the success of the campaign. Not only had the activists cultivated the relationships within parliament, they had an online campaign ready to go at the push of a button. But the most important aspect of this finding is that the activists had joined forces and used the skills and attributes of each other to progress their campaign. Animals Australia had the vision, RSPCA had the government clout and respectability, GetUp! had online campaign expertise and together they became a formidable team; though it is questionable whether any of the organisations working alone

¹⁸⁷ Journalist A, Journalist B, Journalist C, Journalist D, Parliamentary media adviser A, Parliamentary media Adviser B.

¹⁸⁸ PR consultant.

would have been able to garner the same response.

All interviewees were cognisant that the timing of the program was a deliberate act to cause maximum impact to the industry, with mustering season almost complete and cattle waiting in feedlots in northern ports in readiness to head to Indonesia in readiness for Ramadan.¹⁸⁹ While this had a positive impact for the initial stages of the activists' campaign, findings of this study indicate that the timing could also explain the urgency to get the trade back on track due to the economic impact on producers and subsequently worked against the animal activists. According to Industry spokesperson C:

At one stage it looked as though the government wasn't going to move until the six months, but we couldn't have lasted that long. The wet season would have arrived meaning the movement of cattle across the Top End would have to stop and we are left with thousands of cattle with no market.¹⁹⁰

This study demonstrates that the pressure to find a solution became more pressing to the government than the outcry over the animal welfare breaches. Monetary concerns were a theme that dominated the newsprint media for a longer period and with concentrated coverage in the reporting. Welfare was a momentary concern that was fast replaced by financial anxieties and the need to find a rescue package for producers that satisfied their demands.

Finding 2: A successful advocacy campaign can rely on a shocking visual component for the short term, but a follow-up news message is needed for it to be sustained.

The most immediate finding of this study is the assertion that the use of violent and gruesome imagery has been a powerful tool to gain the short-term attention of policy and decision makers (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987) and reveals the extent of external influence exerted over decision making in policy formulation. This

¹⁸⁹ Animal activist A; Coalition politician A; Coalition Politician B; Coalition politician C; Independent politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C; Parliamentary media adviser A; Parliamentary media adviser B; PR consultant.

¹⁹⁰ Industry spokesperson A

finding is supported by the overwhelming number of references made to the visual evidence provided by the *Four Corners* program by interview respondents as well as the media in its reporting and reference to images in Hansard, indicating that dramatic imagery played an important role in raising awareness of the issue (Kelly, 2011; Leigh, 2011; Parke 2011a; Parke, 2011b; Scullion, 2011; Siewart, 2011).¹⁹¹ The anger and the emotion within the animal advocates’ anti-live export campaign were not sustained because of the live export industry’s use of visual imagery and emotive content to prime the news media. The animal advocates failed to provide a next chapter of the narrative and did not counter the news of the ban as damaging to farmers, who were portrayed as marginalised. The animal advocates relied too heavily on the Labor party’s historical relationship with the unions, the voting block agreement with the government, Greens and independents and believed that they would be able to sustain the anger of the Australian public. But evidence proves that this was not the case.

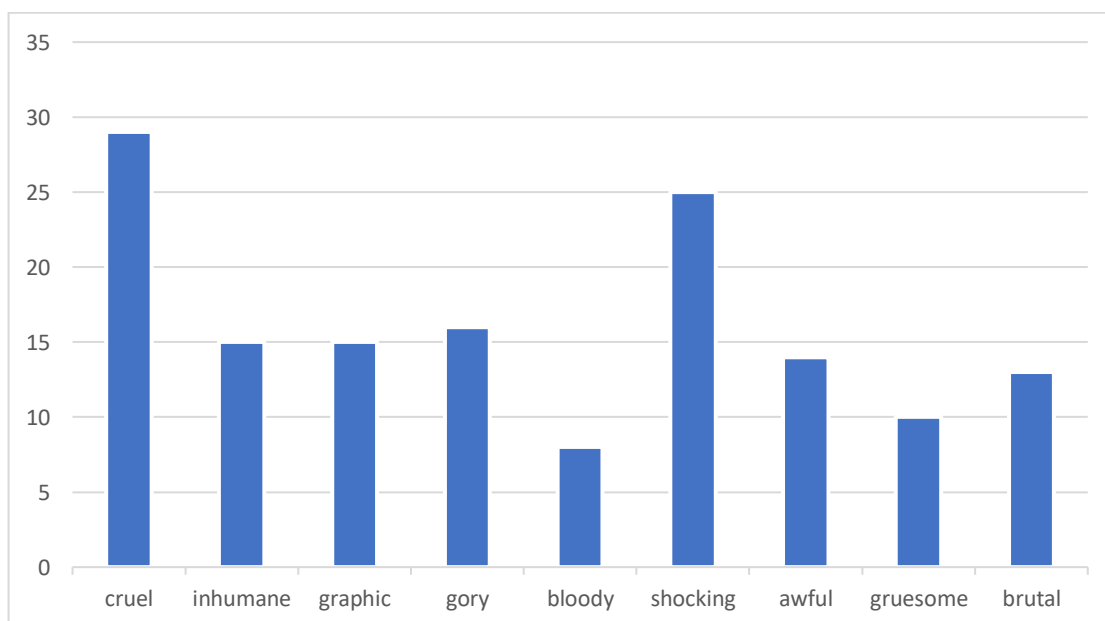


Figure 29: Most frequent words used to describe the *Four Corners*’ program “A Bloody Business”.

¹⁹¹ Animal activist A; Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Independent politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C; Parliamentary media adviser A; Parliamentary media adviser B; PR consultant.

As an adjunct to this finding, this research supports the assertion that while the original imagery as seen in the *Four Corners* program was viewed by a limited number of people in the community, reflected by the poor ratings of the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), the news media reminded the public of the shocking visual images. While this is in part due to newspaper websites having access to still images from the program, it also occurs when any live export issue arises in the public sphere. For instance, on 16 July 2017 newspapers around the country reported on the beginning of the class action against Ludwig and the Gillard government in the Federal Court with reference to:

Graphic images of animal suffering, captured by Animals Australia and *Four Corners*, prompted a massive public outcry which heaped pressure on the Gillard government and industry to intervene and shut down the \$1.4 billion trade (Booth, 2017; Grattan, 2011a, Willingham, 2011a).

This study found that in the newspaper coverage of the *Four Corners* program, there was very little reproduction of the graphic images that caused the outrage. The newspapers' websites did reproduce stills such as the one reproduced below. Parliamentary media adviser A said that the reproduction of graphic images tended to be more effective on websites than in newsprint due to the clarity of colour, allowing for the dramatic nature of the images to be reproduced.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Parliamentary media adviser A.



Figure 30: An image of Australian cattle being tortured in an Indonesian abattoir that formed part of the Four Corner's program, 'A Bloody Business'. (Pic: ABC/Four Corners)

This thesis also noted that images used in the newspapers showed close-ups of the cattle on the live export ships, with an emphasis on the face and the eyes, such as the following image, generating a feeling of empathy towards the animal. This aligns with claims by cultural theorist Barthes (1977) that images can be divided into those that claim an informational and aesthetic value and those which contained an emotive value such as the photograph reproduced below.



Figure 31: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 2011 (Pic: Michelle Mossop)

Imagery, as in the case of the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) footage, has long staked a claim that it provides undisputed evidence. This assertion is supported by Industry spokesperson C who said: "What we saw was quite

unbelievable, but you had to believe it because you were seeing it on the TV.”¹⁹³ Yet the ability to manipulate what is being seen has long been a part of the history of photographic evidence. Extreme wide angles, framing, lighting, sound, extreme low or high angles can distort the imagery, even before the footage is edited. Editing is another layer of manipulation that must be considered when considering footage as a reference source, as mentioned in Chapter Four in relation to the manipulation of the bellowing cattle. According to work undertaken in the field of learning studies, the human brain can absorb 36,000 images every minute (Hyerle, 2000, p. 153) and images, especially dramatic images, convey more information than words, staying in the memory longer and creating a greater impact upon the audience. Therefore, by the airing of the live export footage, the animal advocates together with the ABC wrote the first act of a dramatic narrative that then evolved over the following weeks and months. According to Ericson, Baranek and Chan, it is not only “that one picture is used to say a thousand words. The choice of words itself is a means of visualizing much more than meets the eye” (1987, p. 338).

It is important to recall that the program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011), while informed by the vision supplied to the ABC by Animals Australia, was a program that was socially constructed by the journalist (Jacobs, 1996, p. 378). Industry spokesperson A said: “Sarah [Ferguson] had her view of the story, and as we all suspected, nothing we were going to say was going to change anything. She’s certainly an uncompromising person.”¹⁹⁴ The program used file footage obtained in 2006 when cattle in Egypt were found to be mistreated, again provided by Animals Australia. The way the editing of this program was done was to ensure the story flowed and that there existed a dramatic narrative with definite heroes and villains (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987). Inserting the interviews of the spokespersons into the narrative helped to frame the story. But according to the then head of the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association who spoke to Sarah Ferguson on camera, his views were seriously misrepresented thanks to the editing of the program. Speaking to the rural media he said:

¹⁹³ Industry spokesperson B

¹⁹⁴ Industry spokesperson A

Certainly, the way it was portrayed in the *Four Corners* show made it look like I knew about some of the gross stuff that was later shown on that program - that is what my gripe was about. It made it look like I knew about it when I actually didn't (Bettles, 2016).

It is therefore possible, that what the public saw was not fully representative of the events unfolding. There were reports of the abattoirs workers being bribed,¹⁹⁵ claims that the industry's PR consultant tried to substantiate in the hope of discrediting the footage. While bribery could not be substantiated, the abattoir worker seen hitting the cattle in the footage was interviewed by a Fairfax journalist, who quotes the worker as claiming that he did not mistreat the cattle deliberately. This was in stark contrast to comments made by Lyn White to the media and in the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), in which she said that in her opinion, the abattoir worker looked like he was "getting some gratification out of [hurting the animal] while the animal is simply terrorised" (Allard, 2011a). Indeed, the Labor MP who was the first to speak on the issue in parliament did not say that what was seen was deliberate cruelty at all, but rather a lack of "education and training".¹⁹⁶

Theories in social and health psychology, supported by empirical studies, illustrate the superiority of using pictures and imagery over text-only messages in generating emotional reactions. Fear and graphic pictures have been shown to be effective in motivating a change in behaviour (Fong, Hammond & Hitchman, 2009). More follow-up news is needed for long-term change (Harcup, 2019). This study has found that the impact of the imagery was instrumental in the initial policy decisions made on the live export industry in 2011, with the responses from all seven of the politicians interviewed agreeing that the horrific nature of the pictures had an influence on their decision-making process.¹⁹⁷ As Independent politician A said: "There was no way you could have ignored what we were seeing. It was truly

¹⁹⁵ PR consultant; Coalition politician B.

¹⁹⁶ Labor politician B.

¹⁹⁷ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C, Independent politician A; Labor politician A, Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

awful.”¹⁹⁸ When asked whether there is an element of the community becoming desensitised and therefore the only way for the advocates to be noticed was to procure gruesome images with the singular aim of shocking viewers, there was overall agreement by politicians from both parties and the media.¹⁹⁹ Journalist B is quoted in transcripts as saying:

We see so much violence on the news – it’s a daily occurrence. I can’t see how it wasn’t a calculated move by the animal groups [Animals Australia and RSPCA] to make sure that we all sat back and took notice. And what better way than to show tortured animals.²⁰⁰

In the post-*Four Corners*, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) reporting by the newspaper media, this study found that the live export industry also used imagery to influence policy decision makers. While not violent and graphic, images to support industry’s argument that the trade was having an adverse effect upon hard-working Australians were used to illustrate the plight of the embattled farmer with a focus on the harshness of the land and the impact the ban was having on the family (“Angry farmers front ministers”, 2011; Pennells, 2011; Rout, 2011d). Farmers were shown dressed in check shirts and Akubra hats and moleskins or denims, stereotypical garments that the urban audience could easily identify as belonging to the rural set. As previously mentioned, images also included young children in oversized hats and were found to be endearing by interviewees.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Independent politician A.

¹⁹⁹ Journalist D; Journalist B; Journalist A; Journalist C; Independent politician A; Coalition politician; Coalition politician b; Coalition politician C; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

²⁰⁰ Journalist B. ²⁰⁰ Labor politician B.

²⁰⁰ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C, Independent politician A; Labor politician A, Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

²⁰⁰ Independent politician A.

²⁰⁰ Journalist D; Journalist B; Journalist A; Journalist C; Independent politician A; Coalition politician; Coalition politician b; Coalition politician C; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

²⁰⁰ Journalist B.

²⁰¹ Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; PR consultant.

The use of cartoons within the newspaper media are another example of imagery being used for messaging and there are examples of these cartoons contained within this study. This thesis suggests that by applying the transformative paradigm, cartoonists encourage their readers to consider beyond the limited perspectives otherwise shown and framed, thus inciting the reader to see things differently, which is important when it comes to depicting the marginalised. Many of the cartoons published referred to the disparity between refugee boat arrivals and cattle exports, while other images showed the Prime Minister and others walking onto cattle ships, in feedlots or waiting to be slaughtered (Kudelka, 2011a, 2011b; Leahy, 2011; Nicholson, 2011).

This study therefore finds that gruesome, horrific and emotive images of live export are more likely to gain the short-term attention of the public and politicians (Fong, Hammond & Hitchman, 2009). Therefore, this type of image has become viewed as a necessary tool for the animal welfare advocates to galvanise a group into action. Emotive images were also used by the industry to illustrate hardship and distress with prominence placed on the children of the farmers, doing it tough. This then became the dominant narrative (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2013) . In both instances, the use of imagery was used to achieve a reactive response from the public and the decision makers.

Finding 3: Internal party politics influences policy outcomes

The instability of the Gillard government provided an opportunity for advocates to achieve positive outcomes and the rivalry between Gillard and Rudd presented opportunity. Evidence collated for this study supports the finding that internal Labor party politics heavily influenced the government's behaviour in announcing the ban on live export in the first place, and its decision to reopen the trade. It is therefore a finding of this study that internal party politics played a role in exerting influence over policy formulation. Although evidence indicates that the loud and orchestrated public outcry made it imperative for the Gillard government to act, this study argues the genesis of the government's actions was based on politics, aimed at appeasing an active backbench, attempting to secure leadership while keeping the polls on side. It is prudent to recall that with the distribution of seats,

Labor had one seat at risk with a ban (Warren Snowden's seat of Lingari in WA) but the rise of the Greens in inner-metropolitan areas was an area of great concern. Put simply, the cattle-dependent communities would not vote Labor but inner-metropolitan voters concerned with animal welfare might.

Up until the moment Gillard took over the prime ministership, the media had represented her as a loyal right hand to her leader. The moment she became leader of the party, the rhetoric changed. This change in how Gillard was portrayed illustrates how internal factors can influence decision makers. As said by Labor politician A: "Julia never recovered from the perception of how she took the leadership. From day one she battled a hostile media and a public that saw she was there in Parliament just for her career."²⁰² Even in 2017, the tone within the text of an article on Gillard, written by press gallery stalwart, Chris Kenny, is telling as he writes: "Gillard and her co-accused Kevin Rudd lost control of the nation's borders...They also lost control of the budget and broke faith with the electorate" (Kenny, 2017). Kenny refers to Gillard as someone who "tore down her own leader to seize the prime ministership" (Kenny, 2017) using language that is both aggressive and reactionary, bearing in mind that this article was written well over four years since Rudd was in the Lodge and just after Malcolm Turnbull rolled Tony Abbott in a move not unlike Gillard made when deposing Rudd. This study found that the media were unrelenting in their hostility towards Gillard on live export and this was a view that was reiterated by journalists interviewed for this study.²⁰³ Journalist B said: "There was a feeling of scepticism about her becoming PM, with many thinking that she had simply knifed the PM in the back, so she could get into the Lodge."²⁰⁴

Gillard's election in 2010 was her attempt to seek a "mandate from the Australian people to move Australia forward" (Gillard, 2010). Responding to a journalist's question which focused on the legitimacy of her leadership, she said:

²⁰² Labor Politician A.

²⁰³ Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D.

²⁰⁴ Journalist B.

I made a pledge to the Australian people on the day I became Prime Minister that they would, soon, be able to exercise their birth right, their choice of who should lead this nation. So, I'm delivering on that promise today (Gillard, 2010).

History however shows that the electorate punished the Labor party by returning the first hung parliament since 1940, with independents Andrew Wilkie and rural incumbents Rob Oakeshott, Bob Katter and Tony Windsor holding the balance of power in the House of Representatives. WA Nationals Tony Crook also indicated a desire to sit on the cross bench and is quoted as saying, "I'm clearly an independent ... I can sit on the crossbenches quite comfortably" (O'Brien, 2010), though statistical data indicates that he was more inclined to vote against the government 83 per cent to 13 per cent in favour, while crossing the floor on issues such as the government's flood levy and the vote to fully deregulate the wheat industry (HawkerBritton, 2013).

Following the 2010 election, the Greens entered into an agreement to support the Gillard Government, which they held to in 90 per cent of parliamentary votes (HawkerBritton, 2013). Tasmanian Andrew Wilkie also entered into an agreement with Gillard, conditional on legislation to fight problem gambling. Though he renounced his support on 21 January 2012, he voted with the government in 85 per cent of cases (HawkerBritton, 2013), while Queensland's Bob Katter did not reach an agreement with either party, deciding to vote by conscience on each bill. This is reflected in his voting pattern, which shows Katter voted against the government for 38 per cent of the votes, 21 per cent with the government and abstained on all others (HawkerBritton, 2013). However, it was the gaining of support from Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor that pushed Gillard over the line and allowed her to form government. It is therefore suggested that the existence of the hung parliament and the precarious position of the government made Gillard particularly vulnerable to the demands of the independents and the backbench, and a situation that was acknowledged in interviews with politicians who were in the

43rd parliament and interviewed for this research paper.²⁰⁵ However, it is to be noted that the importance of Windsor and Oakeshott to the live export debate was negligible if not non-existent, unlike Wilkie and Xenophon who dominated the anti-live export debate from within parliament, as evident within the reporting in the newspapers (Allard & Willingham, 2011; Benson, 2011c; Bettles, 2011f; Gray, 2011a). Wilkie, Xenophon and Brandt from the Greens have long been on the record wanting to end live export prior to the 2010 election. Gillard also had other backbenchers who were known animal welfare campaigners including Melissa Parke, Jill Hall, Kelvin Thomson and Janelle Saffin. Therefore, this study found that the influence of the independents on the live export debate, in tandem with the power block within the backbench, added to the complexity of the precarious stability of the parliament.

Gillard's decision to align with the Greens was not a popular one within her party, and this continued to cause havoc throughout her leadership. As Labor politician A said: "Many see the Greens as a one-issue party that had too much influence on the decision being made. You have to remember that the big-ticket issue hanging over our heads was the carbon tax."²⁰⁶ But this research paper identifies the continued existence of Rudd in the parliament that cast a dark shadow over Gillard's hold on the leadership. While not claiming that *Four Corners* was behind the fall of Gillard, its decision to air an episode called *The Comeback Kid* on 13 February 2012 is an interesting editorial move, highlighting the deficiencies in Gillard's leadership, with staunch Rudd supporters leading the commentary on the leadership battle. Given the high esteem in which *Four Corners* is held as an agenda-setting force across the country, it can only be assumed that there was an underlying schema at play and that this episode was part of a strategy. Even calling the program *The Comeback Kid* is presumptuous but indicative of internal and backroom political mumblings.

²⁰⁵ Coalition politician; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

²⁰⁶ Labor politician A.

By the end of 2010, there were commentators writing that the Gillard government was looking reasonably successful (Franklin, 2011d; Shanahan, 2010). In fact, the government was maintaining a record of gaining support from the independents on significant pieces of legislation. In a blog published by the left-leaning *Guardian*, Gillard had the highest rate of passing legislation of any Prime Minister in Australia's history (Evershed, 2013). But there were some who could not and did not want to revel in the government's achievements. Matthew Franklin, chief political correspondent for *The Australian*, wrote in February 2011 that: "Success for Julia Gillard is starting to have perverse consequences for the stability for her government" (Franklin, 2011d). In his article, he writes of grudges against Rudd and Gillard being "impotent in the face of disunity" and tells of explosive Cabinet meetings, appearing to suggest that should Gillard be successful as Prime Minister, her success would be problematic for the party (Franklin, 2011d). In contrast, Gillard has gone on the record as being almost sympathetic towards the media saying: "They're [journalists] trying to accommodate to the pace of change ... the reaction to these changes are more schlock, more drama, more gore, more A versus B, more everything ... stories can disappear almost as soon as they're out there" (Kent, 2013).

Unfortunately for Gillard, significant doubts remained over her ability to govern and she had plenty of people working against her (Foschia, 2011). The Newspoll results released in *The Australian* on 24 July 2011 had the government nearing an all-time low of 27 per cent of the primary vote to the Coalition's 49 per cent reflecting the uncertainty shown in Figure 32 below.

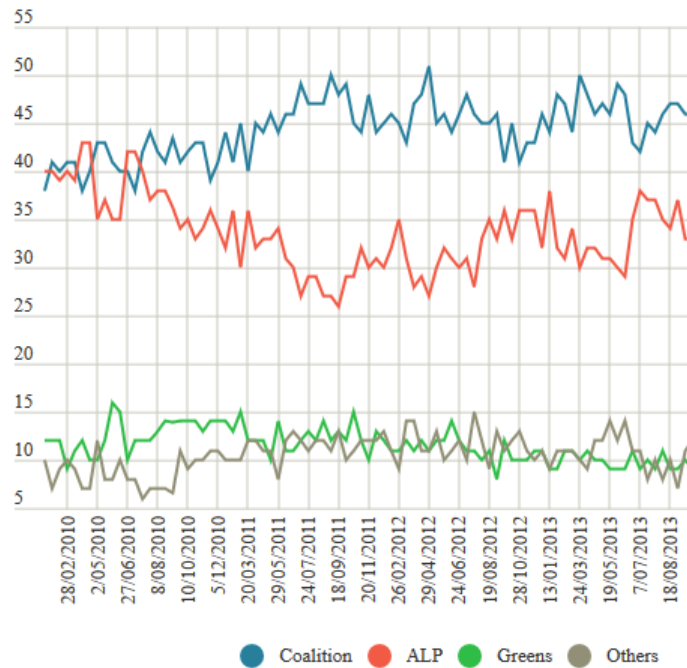


Figure 32: Primary vote pattern. Source 'The State of Play', *The Australian*, retrieved from <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/newspoll>.

While most Prime Ministers would find their haters in the opposition ranks, Gillard also had to contend with Labor insiders who were resentful about her replacing Rudd. Coalition politician A said: “There were distinct sides – those who supported Julia’s knifing of Kevin and those who didn’t. And those who didn’t were relentless in their pursuit. There was such animosity, not only about what she did but how she did it.”²⁰⁷ This unease within Labor is illustrated by well-known media commentator, Phillip Adams, who resigned his life-long Labor membership in protest of the leadership coup. Writing in *The Weekend Australian* early in February 2011 he said: “The failure of Gillard truly to replace Rudd is agonisingly obvious. Her tenure in the job is tenuous. Senior members of her Cabinet see her as a flop. They are talking about dumping her. Sooner rather than later” (Adams, 2011).

By 2011, Australia was preoccupied with leadership destabilisation according to Labor politicians A and B.²⁰⁸ However, they question whether it was at the forefront of the mind of the average punter on the street or was simply the media,

²⁰⁷ Coalition politician A.

²⁰⁸ Labor politician A; Labor politician B.

and particularly those in the press gallery, that propelled the issue to the top of the news cycle, a clear example of agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). For advocacy groups such as the animal activists, the instability offered potential to be heard by the decision makers. This thesis finds that journalists in the press gallery did have a focus on the leadership, summed up by a Coalition politician who recalled in interview: “It was an obsession with the party leadership.”²⁰⁹ This was partly because of Rudd’s determination to regain his old job²¹⁰ and also because the leadership coup that robbed Rudd of the top job took all the gallery by surprise, with the exception of a few ABC journalists. Labor politician B said: “They [the Press Gallery] were keeping a very close eye on everything, jumping at every shadow.”²¹¹ By keeping Rudd on the front bench as Foreign Minister and in Cabinet, Gillard kept the story smouldering, albeit unintentionally. As Labor politician B said in interview for this research: “No other Prime Minister has ever had to deal with the sniping and the unsettling from one of her own sitting on the front bench.”²¹² Journalist Kerry-Anne Walsh concurred, saying that the biggest threat to Gillard’s government came not from Abbott and the opposition, but from Rudd and a band of disaffected supporters. She observed that: “as the months passed, the vast resources of the press gallery became more focused on Rudd’s ambitions for a comeback than anything the historic minority parliament had to offer” (Walsh, 2013, p. xi).

According to Journalist B, who had worked in the press gallery for many years and was a former president of the gallery, Rudd watching became a daily occurrence, and observing how he performed during a time with the government was under stress was particularly newsworthy. He said:

I saw Rudd in the corridors, heading off to what I presume was the PM’s office. Would have been in the height of the live export mania. His face looked thunderous. We all have contacts in the various offices, so I rang mine in Rudd’s who told me that the meeting with the PM was tense. That

²⁰⁹ Coalition politician A.

²¹⁰ Coalition politician A.

²¹¹ Labor politician B.

²¹² Labor politician B.

was enough for me to write about the escalating tension between the PM and Rudd.²¹³

In an opinion piece appearing in the *AFR*, Josh Frydenberg MP, the Member for Kooyong wrote:

His [Rudd's] bitter relationship with the Prime Minister, characterised by a brutal and fresh political slaying, is a recipe for personal tension and policy inconsistencies at the top. One cannot foresee Rudd and Julia Gillard amicably and constructively scripting their lines together on the big issues – a certain prerequisite in a game where words are bullets. Nor can one see that Rudd, with his time spent as a diplomat and prime minister, will willingly accept the judgment of Gillard given her lack of foreign policy experience" (Frydenberg, 2010).

This reference to the Prime Minister's lack of foreign policy experience is relevant to the live export ban and the role Kevin Rudd played in restoring the trade and its subsequent reporting. With editorials such as "Rudd to the Rescue" (2011d), the inference appears quite clear. Rudd, previously a career diplomat before entering politics and who became the Minister for Foreign Affairs after losing the leadership, was being portrayed as the only one within government who could mend the diplomatic fallout caused by the cessation of trade, and who had the ability to negotiate with Indonesia for the export of live cattle to recommence.

This study also found it apparent that the reporting emanating from the press gallery indicated that there was little belief that Gillard could control Rudd. Miranda Devine wrote in the *Sunday Herald* that Rudd must stop swanning around and called on Gillard to pull Rudd into line (Devine, 2011c). Journalists and commentators known to be closest to Rudd, notably Peter Hartcher and Phillip Adams, alongside a handful of others at *The Australian*, were continually reminding the Australian public that Rudd was still in the game, while Rudd's supporters in caucus, led by Ministers Kim Carr, Joel Fitzgibbon and Robert McClelland, used their contacts in the media to agitate, and were always available for comment.²¹⁴ This

²¹³ Journalist B.

²¹⁴ Journalist A; Journalist D.

disharmony in the federal government provided the animal activists with opportunity in their fight to end the live export trade.

As mentioned previously, the obsession with Gillard and the constant marking down of her performance on live export is wildly at odds with the reality of the achievements of the minority government. Coalition politician C said: “If Gillard had had a stable party, then she would have been dangerous. She was one of the best negotiators I have ever seen.”²¹⁵ This study finds that while public opinion can be considered as a driver behind the backbench applying the pressure on Cabinet and the Prime Minister, decisions were made for political survival. Upon reviewing the media articles and the transcripts of the interviewees, it is clear to see how the suspension of the trade announced on 8 June 2011 averted a potentially angry debate in caucus. This was something that Gillard did not want or need. With backbenchers Janelle Saffin and Kelvin Thomson calling for a party room vote to immediately cease live export to Indonesia, and Melissa Parke publicly speaking out on the need for a full ban, Gillard was playing a dangerous numbers game. There was little doubt that Gillard “caved” into pressure. But it could be contended that she had little choice given the precarious hold she had over the leadership and the government. This study has found that through the media reporting, the interviews with politicians and other stakeholders that Gillard agreed to the suspension to head off an embarrassing party room revolt. By Gillard announcing the ban prior to the caucus meeting, she scuttled Kelvin Thompson’s and Janelle Saffin’s move to call for a vote. It is widely understood that supporters of banning the trade had the numbers and therefore it would have gained the approval of caucus regardless of the intent of the PM.²¹⁶ If that had happened, it would have been the first time that caucus had flexed its muscles and voted against the Prime Minister since Gillard took over the leadership. This is a clear example of the internal and external influences exerted over decision makers.

There was little doubt that much of the anger from the backbench was directed at Ludwig, who they believed was weak and had not shown true

²¹⁵ Coalition politician C.

²¹⁶ Labor politician A; Labor politician B; PR consultant.

leadership. According to the NSW Coalition backbencher interviewed, there were many on the conservative side of politics who felt sorry for Ludwig.²¹⁷ Even industry felt that the Ludwig was left out in the cold, with the announcement of the ban coming from the Prime Minister's office. Coalition politician A said:

We all felt sorry for Joe [Ludwig]. In fact, I reached out to him to help. He had complete bipartisan support up until they announced the total ban and we knew that wasn't coming from him.²¹⁸

The cartoon by Alan Moir ran in the *SMH* on 10 June 2011, satirically illustrates the differing interest groups that Ludwig and, in turn, the Gillard government had to appease.



Figure 33: Allan Moir, Animal Cruelty, *SMH*, 10 June 2011

This thesis has demonstrated that internal Labor Party instability, coupled with the hung parliament, worked in favour of the animal activists, providing them with the opportunity to use the disquiet within the party to raise live export on the political agenda and the same political turmoil was subsequently used by the industry to turn the ban around. It is the finding of this research that Rudd's desire to remain relevant worked in the industry's favour and brought about an end to the ban. The rivalry offered opportunity for advocates to exert influence over decision makers and impact upon the policy making process. For future advocates, the challenge will be to find the weakness within the political parties and to use it advantageously.

²¹⁷ Coalition politician A.

²¹⁸ Coalition politician C.

Finding 4: A mutually dependent relationship exists between the press gallery and politicians.

This study has found that the media understands their role in the policy making process, believing that they serve the public by reporting and steering policy. How the live export industry and their opponents used the media to secure government support is clearly highlighted within this study, which also illustrates how the Canberra press gallery revels in a story that exposes a policy gone wrong. There is a strong supportive argument that was evident throughout the study and supported by politicians, activists and industry that one of the key roles of the press gallery – who are more closely positioned to politicians than any other media source – is to inform the public about what the government is doing, good and bad. It would be fair to assume that government itself is hesitant to call attention to bad decisions. This is affirmed by former secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in the report, “Learning from Failure: Why large government policy initiatives have gone so badly wrong in the past and how the chances of success in the future can be improved” (Shergold, 2015). This report suggests that in a world with 24-hour media cycles, driven by “gotcha” moments and demands for greater accountability, it is difficult for government to admit failure. While undertaking this research, it became clear that the relationship between the press gallery and politicians was important and dual dependent, with both parties being willing participants in the democratic communication process, characterised by an understanding that they will use and be used. Journalist B is quoted as saying in interview transcript: “The gallery is always preoccupied with the politics of conflict. Conflict makes the best story and that is what will get published. We are in constant competition with our peers not only with the other papers.”²¹⁹

In the case study that has informed this research, there is clear evidence that one specific media outlet, the ABC, sparked a chain of events that was multi-layered and intricate. On one level there was the live export industry but beneath the topical issue was the Machiavellian plotting, scheming, jostling that signifies

²¹⁹ Journalist B.

modern politics. This was evident throughout the study via the newspaper articles as well as the interviews with politicians and media. As Journalist B said in an interview for this research paper: “The media doesn’t create the chaos that erupts from time to time although it does enthusiastically report it; but the chaos is there to be reported.”²²⁰ Reflecting on the role of the journalist in the policy process, he continued:

I love being a journalist. I see my role as providing that line of defence, protecting the public from stupid policy. I have the power to make government change their mind. It’s a great sense of power and achievement when you are behind the change.”²²¹

This task of holding politicians to account has resulted in a gradual shift in the relationship between journalists and the politicians. According to Journalist A:

In some respects, it is so hard to have a sustained policy debate in the media these days. It is all about a quick turn around – the speed of the news cycle. Our news has become so superficial and skims the surface.²²²

By collating material according to dominant themes that emerged from the live export reporting, this study has illustrated that the press gallery exhibits a “herd like mentality” (Payne, 1997). This claim is demonstrated with stories emanating from one masthead that proceeded down one path of an argument, only for the argument to be then picked up by another. The difference can be seen in the framing of the article dependent on the journalist’s point of view. This belief was held and repeated by the politicians of all persuasions²²³ but argued against by journalists interviewed for this paper, who considered such an inference demeaning and indicative of poor standards and lack of independent research.²²⁴ But all the journalists and the media professionals²²⁵ interviewed for this paper believe that

²²⁰Journalist B.

²²¹ Journalist A.

²²² Coalition politician C.

²²³ Coalition politician A, Coalition politician B, Coalition politician C, Independent politician A, Labor politician A, Labor politician B, Labor politician C.

²²⁴ Journalist A, Journalist B, Journalist C, Journalist D.

²²⁵ Parliamentary media adviser A, Parliamentary media adviser B.

they have an important role in the policy process, with the PR consultant employed by industry saying: “Media is an extension of policy – but the relationship limits the issues that our politicians focus on. It tends to be the sexy ones.”²²⁶

This study finds that the source of the evidence has an impact on the tone and the framing of the article. It is mindful to recall that it is not just the politicians that use the media, but the advocate and the pro-live export campaigner did too. This study shows that the journalist has a reliance on his/her sources within Parliament House and this was made evident in the context of many of the stories with many references made to “a source” (Crowe, 2011a, 2011b; Johnson, 2011; Rout, 2011a; Bidda & Jones, 2016, p. 119). It is suggested by previous scholarship and evident within this study that news is a social and cultural construction of journalists and their sources, and that sources result in the creation of news becoming reporters for the news organisations themselves (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987, p. 345). This study shows that cultivating a network of sources within the political arena is paramount for press gallery journalists, a network made up of politicians and media advisers. Journalist C said: “One of the most important things you can have in Canberra is a good set of sources. Stories just don’t lie around. You have to find them”²²⁷. Labor politician B concurred, “... all the journalists have different sources they turn to. They develop relationships which they hope will give them leads.”²²⁸ With the government at odds with itself over the leadership, leaks were coming from Cabinet whereas historically the backbench was often the source of information for the gallery (Payne, 1997), reporting back to the media the outcomes of meetings with ministers, the Prime Minister and party room meetings. According to Journalist D:

You would be a complete disaster if you didn’t have a source inside the party room [Coalition] or Caucus [Labor]. Usually they [the politician] are texting

²²⁶ PR consultant.

²²⁷ Journalist C.

²²⁸ Labor politician B.

you updates on the meetings as they are taking place. This place [Parliament House] leaks like a sieve.²²⁹

Finding 5: Successful advocacy campaigns can involve advocacy journalism.

This study has found that the *Four Corners*' program was an example of advocacy journalism, lacking in objectivity (Janowitz, 1975). This finding directly relates to the research question underpinning this study that queries the influences over federal government policy relevant to the Australian agricultural sector. The finding that advocacy journalism was evident goes some way to disclose the extent to which internal and external factors exert influence, and how the export industry and their opponents leverage the media to secure policy change. This research has found that the ABC *Four Corners* (Ferguson, 2011) program was a carefully and skilfully crafted piece of advocacy journalism with a driven agenda. This assertion was overwhelmingly supported by those interviewed for this paper, including politicians, the media as well as industry.²³⁰ Animal activist A said: "With her profile, we were grateful that Sarah was a supporter."²³¹

There is no doubt that the *Four Corners* program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011) was informative; however, it had an obvious agenda. This was demonstrated by the way the program was scripted and produced (Jones & Davies, 2016). The material collated for this research suggests that the way in which the story was assembled and framed resulted in a specific version of reality. The use of the Animals Australia footage in conjunction with ABC footage is testament to a symbiotic relationship. The research indicates that the program was designed to push the government into acting and changing the policy over live exports.

The research indicates that the ABC, on the back of criticism over its reporting of the NBN, released guidance notes on "Differentiating Analysis" to staff on 11 April 2011 (Ferguson, 2011). Within these notes are listed key editorial standards in which impartiality is highlighted: "The ABC has statutory duties to

²²⁹ Journalist D

²³⁰ Coalition politician A, Coalition politician C, Labor politician A, Labor politician B, Labor politician C, Industry spokesperson A, Industry spokesperson B, Journalist A, Journalist B, Journalist C.

²³¹ Animal activist A.

maintain its independence and integrity and to ensure that its presentation of news and information is impartial according to the recognised standards of objective journalism ...” (Ferguson, 2011). This study finds that while objective journalism is journalism that not only gets the facts right but also gets the meaning behind events correct, as suggested by Allman and quoted by Pilger (2005), “A Bloody Business” is an example of advocacy journalism verging on being a public relations vehicle for the animal activists. Therefore, Sarah Ferguson has not been objective in her story. There is one deciding factor that prevents the program being categorised as a public relations campaign, and that is that the animal welfare organisations were not a client of the broadcaster. This distinction is supported by Burns (2013) who states the differentiation between advocacy journalism and PR is that for PR practitioners, “text is a form of advocacy, intended to persuade rather than inform” (p. 19). Similarly, Spence, Alexandra and Quinn (2011) argue that the central purpose of journalism is to “inform in the public interest”, whereas the primary goal of PR is “to advocate in the client’s interest” (p. 113). Therefore, this research finds that the program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011) was an example of advocacy journalism, and that this finding has been derived from assessing the tone within the narrative created by Ferguson and substantiated by how the arguments were framed.

As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, *Four Corners* is revered in Australia for providing quality objective journalism, in the tradition of e reporting where it serves to uncover problems in the social fabric of society (De burgh, 2000), in difference to partisan witch-hunting (Feldstein, 2009). In the tradition of objective reporting, the ABC revisited Indonesia after being provided footage by Animals Australia and did not solely rely on that obtained by the animal activists (Bidda & Jones, 2016).²³² However, the ABC did not talk or seek material from the industry prior to filming in Indonesia²³³. To have spoken to industry would have alerted industry and potentially quashed a ground-breaking story.

Therefore, this study argues that advocacy journalism is determined by the

²³² Animal activist A, PR consultant.

²³³ Animal activist A, Industry spokesperson A, PR consultant.

level of involvement from advocacy groups. According to Christopher Hitchens (2004), there is an important difference between investigation that approaches discovery and revelation with an impartial mindset and valuing counter-mindset as highly as proof, and advocacy that does not. Surely, “A Bloody Business” is therefore an example of advocacy journalism rather than objective journalism. It was advocating for a cause – to end live export. Journalist B said, “the story was produced with the aim to manipulate public opinion and enact policy change and had the overt involvement of the animal rights groups.”²³⁴ It was very clear that the program had a defined purpose. “A Bloody Business”, “... pleads on behalf of another, giving the other a face and a voice,” which is the exact definition of advocacy journalism as determined by journalist and commentator Sue Careless (2000).

Advocacy journalists get involved in the story and work with campaigners as seen by the actions of Sarah Ferguson and her work alongside Animals Australia and the RSPCA. It is not enough for the story for the facts to be told; advocacy journalism needs a story to be told, engage with the story and wants the audience to act. The delivery of the story must be told in a different way from that of a mainstream news item and must stir emotion as was found to be the case with the *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011).

This thesis also found a growing emergence of high-profile journalists writing as opinion leaders (Calacouras, 2011b; Devine, 2011d; Grattan, 2011a), where the article is unapologetically framed to support one side of an argument over the other and is often more emotive in tone than factual to be directed at policy makers and intended as a political intervention (McNair, 2009, p. 12) According to Journalist B:

this was a very emotive issue, but if you notice it wasn't the junior journo that was getting their opinion pieces published. You have to have some standing in the industry for people to take your opinion seriously.²³⁵

This study has found that the line between opinion and news is disappearing and journalists are taking a more active role. According to Journalist C, who has worked

²³⁴ Journalist B.

²³⁵ Journalist B.

for both ABC and News Corp, the business model for today's media means that opinion has become a part of the news process, saying:

This is what happens when you make the journalist a brand. Even just by giving them a Twitter handle, it gives journalists the opportunity to spruik their opinions and removes them from being a straight news reporter. That's the model that we are working with now.²³⁶

Coalition politician B opines that journalists overstep their role, saying that:

... readers don't want to hear what the journalist thinks about a topic. They want to make up their own mind. There is no place for commentary in news reporting. That is unless it's labelled as opinion of course and then it would have to be from someone with the runs on the board.²³⁷

Journalist D, writing for Fairfax, says:

Things have changed. In the days when I started, it was always said that the reader should never know who you [the journalist] voted for. But now content is tainted one way or another. There is no objective political reporting anymore.²³⁸

Four interviewees for this research made the rhetorical statement that "all journalists are advocates in one way or another"²³⁹ and this view is supported by Waisbord (2008, p.374). Those participants interviewed for this research who were in favour of the live export ban, did not find the program biased²⁴⁰. As the Tasmanian Independent politician A recalled: "No, the ABC is not biased. *Four Corners* by its nature has an angle in a story – every story has an angle – that's not bias. The ABC's role is to challenge the government of the day."²⁴¹

While interview respondents focused on the existence of a bias within the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), this study finds that the reporting of the

²³⁶ Journalist C.

²³⁷ Coalition politician B.

²³⁸ Journalist D.

²³⁹ Journalist A; Journalist B; Parliamentary media adviser A.

²⁴⁰ Animal activist A, Independent politician A, Labor politician A, Labor politician B, Labor politician C, Parliamentary media adviser A.

²⁴¹ Independent politician A.

subsequent crisis indicates a level of prejudice for or against the trade dependent on party lines as evident within the mastheads in this study sample. Murdoch's News Limited were very anti-government and anti-Ludwig (Alford, 2011b, 2011c; Franklin, 2011b, 2011c; Rout, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e) and pro-producers (McKenna & Shanahan, 2011; Parnell, 2011; Vasek, 2011) while Fairfax tended to be more anti-industry (Allard, 2011b; Coorey, 2011a, 2011b; Peake, 2011; Willingham, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e). The PR consultant paid for by industry travelled to Indonesia during the crisis with the sole intent of steering Fairfax to write an article in the industry's favour following claims of collusion between the slaughterman caught on camera and Animals Australia. He said:

I was nervous he [the journalist] may start without me. There are two downsides to this; that the story could turn into an allegation that is subsequently disproved - a total disaster for me - and secondly, if I'm not quietly in the background, industry won't shower me with cash and gratitude.²⁴²

This thesis contests that the resulting media story, published on page 1 of *The Age*, is an example of a story that shows the trajectory of balanced reporting. The journalist followed a lead by employing independent research to reach a conclusion in variance from advocacy journalism where the conclusion was already decided (Allard, 2011a).

While the newspaper article could not discredit the animal cruelty story, they did actively question the morality of Animals Australia (Allard, 2011a). It should be noted that this article appeared in a Fairfax paper, known to be anti-industry, and engagement with the paper a strategic move by the PR consultant. Not entirely a success for the industry, with the PR consultant saying:

The guy who let Animals Australia into the premise was sacked and has just been left to rot. He lost his job and he hasn't been compensated in any way by the animal lot. If you read the story, the abandonment is implied but we didn't get a lot of traction with sympathy. I was looking for a more open and obvious "Lyn White lied" but I didn't get that. Even though there are still so

²⁴² PR consultant.

many grey areas.²⁴³

Therefore, it is the claim of this study that the role of the journalist is to focus on the ideal of objectivity, stressing factual reporting over commentary, balancing opposing viewpoints and maintaining the role of neutral observer. This is even more so when broadcasted via the nation's broadcaster funded by the national purse.

This finding clearly responds to the research question that considers how and to what extent the live export industry and opponents leverage the media to secure government support or policy change. This study has found that there is an overwhelming belief amongst a large proportion of those interviewed that the 24/7 news cycle has meant that there are more instances of journalists becoming advocates and that there has been a narrowing of the news agenda.²⁴⁴ The pressures and the limited operational budgets often mean that journalists rely on the material presented to them. A question that must therefore be asked is whether there is a place in the mainstream media for advocacy journalism, given its lack of objectivity, particularly from a taxpayer-funded vehicle such as the ABC.

Finding 6: There is power in the backbench and the crossbench

When revealing who has significant influence on federal policies relating to the live export of cattle, this study has demonstrated that there was significant political power in the backbench in stark comparison with limited involvement on the issue of live export from independents Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott who were sitting on the crossbench and supposedly representing the interests of rural Australia. This study also found that the members of the crossbench who were prominent in the debate were Andrew Wilkie from Tasmania and, in the Senate, Nick Xenophon from South Australia, whose electorates were not immediately affected by the ban. Findings from the evidence support assertions the voice of the rural independents paled into insignificance when it came to the noise emanating from the electorates of the inner-metropolitan urban centres, which directly

²⁴³ PR consultant.

²⁴⁴ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Independent politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Journalist A, Journalist B, Journalist D, Labor politician B; Labor politician C; Parliamentary media adviser B.

impacted upon the political security of members of the backbench. As revealed in the interview by prominent and long-serving backbench Labor politician C: “If it was a choice between supporting the [live export] industry and lose my job or support the ban and keep my job, even a fool would know the outcome.”²⁴⁵

Anecdotally, rural and regional Australia has not been a vote winner for Labor, with natural allegiances falling to the Nationals and, by default, their Coalition conservative partners, the Liberals. But Labor’s alignment with rural and regional Australia changed when, on Tuesday, 7 September 2010, after 17 days of negotiations, two of the three rural independents, Oakeshott and Windsor, announced their decision to support a Labor government. In justifying this outcome, Windsor said that the vote of the country had been sidelined for too long and had been:

subsumed into two major parties which are dominated by city-based majorities and the elections have been fought on the western suburbs of our major cities so that country issues haven’t really come to the fore ... the fact that there are country independents in this building indicates that country people have had enough ... so we are taking advantage of a particular political moment and sending a signal to country people that if you want to be taken for granted, go back to the old parties (Windsor, 2010).

A sense of being forgotten, or ignored, has been a recurring theme in recent analyses of the rural and regional vote in election campaigns (Curtin, 2004), but the election results of 2010 gave rural and regional Australia probably the biggest “win” in decades, with the three rural independents placed in the unique position of ensuring rural and regional Australia were given the undivided attention of the major party leaders. So, if the above was true, and rural and regional Australia was experiencing a time when it held such power in parliament, how could the federal government move to halt an industry that is a pivotal source of income for members of Australia’s rural community?

This study has found that the answer to this question lies in the fact the power of the parliament was being held by the backbench of the Labor caucus. This

²⁴⁵ Labor politician C.

claim is supported by the newspaper articles heralding that the backbench would revolt against the leadership if there was no ban put in place, and the anger with which members of the backbench spoke out once the ban was lifted; claiming that the ban had not been in place long enough, and disappointment that stunning had not been made mandatory for abattoirs that received Australian cattle (Bettles, 2011f; Franklin, 2011e; Wilson, 2011c). It is also substantiated in interviews by politicians and media pundits alike.²⁴⁶ Attention was paid to the backbench by the PR consultant employed by industry, who made calls to members of the backbench with industry representatives.²⁴⁷ The animal activists, in the initial stages of their campaign, identified those in the backbench who would work with them and proceeded to nurture that relationship. According to the interviewed journalists, the media found the backbench all too happy to talk and provide comment to fuel stories that all appeared to have the underlying and subtle message that Gillard was a leader under threat.²⁴⁸

There is no doubt that the 43rd Parliament had a crossbench that needed to be carefully negotiated, and this continues to be the case for any future government. Independent politician A said that being on the crossbench and an independent allowed him to raise issues that may otherwise have been difficult if he were to raise them as a member of a major party. Using the independents in parliament can be a very powerful aspect of the parliamentary process that can be garnished by the advocates to their advantage and a tactic that RSPCA and Animals Australia undertook. While major parties have policy positions which their representatives are asked to hold to, an independent does not and enjoys the freedom to take a position on a policy that accords with their own values. Many backbenchers resist speaking against a party position on policy for fear of ruining their chances of promotion no matter if they disagree on a policy personally. According to Coalition politician B:

²⁴⁶ Journalist A; Journalist C; Journalist D; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C; Parliamentary media adviser A, Parliamentary media adviser B; PR consultant.

²⁴⁷ PR consultant.

²⁴⁸ Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist C.

There is no way that I would speak out against the party publicly. I might in the party room but once a position is adopted, I'm bound as a member of the party to stay true to that position. I don't want to be on the backbench forever."²⁴⁹

These constraints do not exist for the independent politician.

The backbench policy committees meet outside caucus or the party room and consider stakeholder input into policy that can be used as an important segue into the decision-making process. In this case study, research found that Labor's backbench Agricultural Committee tried to push a policy that mandated stunning but at that last moment, did not have the support within the committee and in a bid to allow the trade to resume as quickly as possible did not push for stunning.²⁵⁰ While Cabinet deferred to the committee as soon as the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) was aired, evidence from respondents indicate that the announcement of the ban to all abattoirs was an autocratic decision made by Gillard prior to informing Ludwig.²⁵¹

The uncertainty of the hung parliament in 2011 and Rudd waiting in the wings did not make for a stable government, despite Gillard's successes. The atmosphere within the parliament was that everything was on a knife edge, making destabilisation easier and more effective.²⁵² For the advocate, a hung parliament offered an opportunity to play the many sides off one another for a result. This study also found a level of self-interest on the part of the politicians that could also be used to the advantage of the advocate, with the fear of losing government and/or their seats a powerful genesis for making things occur. As Labor politician C said, "I wasn't about to lose my seat by voting against the wishes of my electorate."²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Coalition politician B

²⁵⁰ Labor politician A.

²⁵¹ Labor politician A, Labor politician B, Labor politician C.

²⁵² Journalist A, Journalist B, Parliamentary media adviser B.

²⁵³ Labor politician C.

Worldwide political trending indicates that hung parliaments will occur more frequently than in the past, due to the rise of the minor parties and voter dissatisfaction with major political movements.²⁵⁴ While there is undoubtedly power in the crossbench, and the chance of a more exciting political narrative, to ignore the backbench politicians and the influence that they wield would be counterproductive for any advocacy group wanting to influence a policy decision. In the words of Journalist B after Rudd lost the 2013 election: “We journalists will miss the hung parliament. It’s had more than a touch of excitement about it from beginning to end.”²⁵⁵

Similarly to the creation of fiction, journalists use emotionally charged content to engage the audience, as quoted by Postman (1985, p.10), “our media-metaphors classify the world for us [journalists], sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, colour, it, argue a case for what our world is like”. By using words that evoke emotion and excitement, it is evident within this thesis that the media have been able to create a dramatic narrative that represented a political environment that was on tenterhooks and in crisis.

Finding 7: Adverse media coverage of an industry crisis can cause reputational damage.

In revealing how media representation of the changes to Australia’s live export policy affected the global food supply, this study found competing views were offered by the respondents. Those who supported the ban, tended to be on the left side of the political fence and saw Australia as having a role to play in improving standards which would have a positive effect for the welfare of all animals, whether they be sourced from Australia or not.²⁵⁶ Those on the other side of the debate and who were more on the right side of politics, considered the ban to have had an adverse effect on the country’s reputation, and industry overall was going to suffer the ramifications.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Coalition politician A; Labor politician C.

²⁵⁵ Journalist B

²⁵⁶ Animal activist A; Labor politician A; Labor politician C.

²⁵⁷ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Industry spokesperson A.

However, given that there were overwhelming news references to the events in 2011 as being a crisis to the live export trade (Alford, 2011a; Allard & Willingham, 2011a, 2011b; Barrass, 2011a; Fraser, 2011b; Grattan, 2011b; Hockley, 2011a; Willingham, 2011a, 2011b), and reputational damage is a hallmark for a crisis (Bitekine, 2011; Grundy, 2013), this study finds that there was damage to the perception of Australia's ability to contribute to the global food supply.

Australia has a long history of exporting agricultural products, with a healthy and growing market being found in Asia's burgeoning middle class. With growing food demands, Australia is well placed to continue to provide a valuable source of protein to developing countries such as Indonesia. While Indonesia has long been wanting to have an autonomous cattle industry with President Widodo saying that the country could become self-sufficient in nine to 10 years (Amindoni, 2016), such nationalistic aims are proving difficult due to the lack of prime grazing land, a small national herd and problematic breeding programs. Australian beef, as previously mentioned in earlier chapters of this research paper, is popular with consumers due to its consistently high quality and standard.

This study found that animal activists and pro-ban supporters believed that Australia had a responsibility to improve the slaughtering standards, thus improving the welfare for all animals. This study finds that there was an element of believing that Australia had a moral responsibility to be present in the trade based on animal welfare grounds. Firstly, Australia's relatively high animal welfare standards help to gradually improve animal treatment in other nations. Secondly, Australia's retreat would encourage the sourcing of animals from countries further afield, with far worse animal welfare records. Many producers also applauded the government's commitment to improve regulations which would have a knock-on effect. But the motivation differed, with animal activists taking a moralistic and ethical standpoint²⁵⁸ while it is evident that industry could see the financial benefits of cleaning up the industry to prevent further closures of the trade.²⁵⁹

Public values and attitudes towards animals are changing and is evident in

²⁵⁸ Animal activist A.

²⁵⁹ Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B.

Australia by an increase in public concern and emotional engagement regarding the treatment of animals (Bennett & Blaney, 2003). In a developed country, such as Australia, consumers have the power to raise the standards of farm animal welfare by translating their preferences and concerns into accurate market drivers and market signals. This is particularly evident with consumers wanting to purchase cage-free eggs or grass-fed beef. But while Australian consumers have this luxury, in developing countries this is far from the case, and one must question whether Australia can impose our morals on another country when the bottom line is about feeding a nation. What can be said is that the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011) called into question the live export industry's social licence and legitimacy to operate (Bitektine, 2011). While the concept of social licence is somewhat intangible with its foundations in ethical business practice, there is no doubt that the concept is real given the recent call for companies to hold a "social license to operate" and for that to be included in changes to the ASX Corporate Governance Principles (ASX Corporate Governance Council, 2019). Although the Principles stayed away from using the terminology "social license" in favour of "reputation" and "standing in the community", the sentiment is the same. Increasingly, profitable and otherwise successful businesses are having their operations suspended or shut down as a response to moral shortcomings as consumers are questioning the primary source of products and this was ultimately tested when the ban on live exports occurred. Industry spokesperson A said in interview for this research that embracing a "social licence" would enable the live export trade to build trust with the Australian public. He said:

I can't think of any other sector that has been under such intense scrutiny by activists and the media, and who have on several occasions had their 'social licence to operate' revoked. It is imperative that the industry has a social licence which means we have the ongoing approval and broad acceptance within the local community and other stakeholders to be the main source of high-quality protein to these nations.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Industry spokesperson A.

While regaining the trust of the Australian public is one aspect of reputation damage that had to be mended, this study found that the news coverage of the ban on live export damaged Australia's position with trading partners, despite Australia's heavy investment in safeguarding a reputation, thanks to numerous trading projects, Free Trade Agreements and many other government-initiated programs (Gannon, 2011b; "Warning Australian trade at risk", 2011). Coalition politician A lamented:

I had other industries coming to me and saying, if they [the government] can do it [the ban] to live export then what is stopping them from doing it to us?²⁶¹

In interview, he made reference to Gillard making Australia a "sovereign risk", running the risk of scaring off international investors and risking the profitability of the industry due to increased regulation; however, this was a phrase that only he used in this context and upon further reflection it could be argued that he distorted its definition for political gain and for dramatic effect.

The media represented Indonesia's threat to report Australia to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as not an idle one (Franklin, 2011a, 2011b). Australia has been a member of the WTO since 1995 and was instrumental in its establishment. With the WTO's focus on securing a strong and open global trading environment, it would have been of great embarrassment to the Australian government had Indonesia referred them to the WTO and could have caused other nations to review their agreements. According to Coalition politician B, the claim that Australia was racially discriminating by introducing the ban was particularly harmful. He said: "Playing the race and, indirectly, the religion card was not going to look good for us. Considering that a number of our other trading partners were Islamic countries too."²⁶²

This study finds that there was no question across the commentary as to the value of Australian beef to Indonesia as a protein source for the growing middle classes, and indeed there appeared to be tacit understanding of Indonesia's

²⁶¹ Journalist A.

²⁶² Coalition politician B.

dependence on Australia's cattle imports for food security and social harmony. But within the research, trust emerged as a theme following the announcement of the ban especially in terms of being a reliable trading partner and provider of food (Parnell, 2011b; "Warning Australian trade at risk", 2011). Diplomacy is built on trust which is why the ban on live exports to Indonesia was met with such opposition in that country, with the Indonesians trusting Australia to provide a reliable food source and the government failing. According to Coalition politician A:

I doubt that anyone at MLA thought for one moment that the industry would be shut down because of what happened in an abattoir overseas. But it did happen. Whether it was a rogue slaughterman or not, being caught on film stopped a billion-dollar industry that supplies food. And this should never have happened.²⁶³

However, this research finds that due to the evolving expectations of society, industry and companies are finding that they need to be more aware and consider moral and ethical issues as a corporate risk and legitimacy (Bitektine, 2011) This research found that the news coverage of the ban on trade with Indonesia had the effect of impressing upon industry and overseas countries that animal welfare issues would be central to Australian Government consideration of livestock export trade issues.

Finding a solution that ensured the sustainability of Australia to supply meat to Indonesia was a view that was held across all respondents and from proponents on either side to the debate.²⁶⁴ While the motives for the need for a solution may have differed, all interviewees supported this finding. As previously mentioned in Chapter Five, the animal activists were not calling for Australia's trading partners to stop eating beef, but rather calling for a different form of slaughter practice to be adopted to ensure that welfare breaches would not occur.

²⁶³ Coalition politician A.

²⁶⁴ Animal activist A; Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C. Independent politician A; Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C; Journalist A, Journalist B; Journalist C; Journalist D; Parliamentary media adviser A; Parliamentary media adviser B; PR consultant.

Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the broader findings of this research based on evidence and provides a blueprint for informing journalists, public relations and public policy professionals, advocates and researchers, indicating the factors shaping a policy shift using the live export industry and events in 2011 as a case study. This study also provides a first-hand examination of the effects of media on the industry policy unlike other academic discussions. This chapter shares the findings of this research which indicate that, while the media was instrumental in the unfolding events of 2011, there were other factors at play that were complicit in manoeuvring change to policy. The findings in this chapter outline many of the essential ingredients needed to influence policy decision makers in a media and political climate that is fluid and ever-changing within the public sphere. While the events of 2011 occurred in a rare political environment, this study has highlighted many activities that worked in unison to achieve successive policy shifts.

Chapter Ten:

Conclusion



Figure 34: David Rowe, 'Detention' *Australian Financial Review*, 9 June 2011

This primarily qualitative study, with quantitative content analysis methodology applied to the research sample, has been an examination of Australian policy development and provides explicit illustrations of the role of various players within the process. By using the Australian live export industry as a case study, this thesis has been able to show how the policy making process can be swayed, while answering the fundamental question of what influences federal government policy relevant to the Australian agricultural sector, in particular the live export market, and what are its global implications. By using events that occurred to the live export

trade in 2011 as the case study, the evidence collated from newspaper articles, parliamentary debate and interviews has shown that the media alone is not the conduit for policy change; but that the media, together with a community campaign and advocates taking advantage of divisions within the political elite, can influence policy change.

Returning to the research question posed at the beginning of this thesis querying what influences federal policies, and the extent of both internal and external influences over decision makers in the Australian federal parliament, this concluding chapter will highlight findings from the evidence uncovered through the research process.

During the research of this thesis it became evident that the ban of the live export of cattle to Indonesia in 2011 was the result of a myriad of influences that included the media, community and advocacy that occurred under the umbrella of political agendas. The program, "A Bloody Business" (Ferguson, 2011), produced by the ABC illustrated how investigative journalism and advocacy journalism are entwined but that the existence of an obvious agenda on the part of the ABC introduced elements of PR thus questioning the objectivity of the product. The media's reaction to the program and the narrative that evolved within the reporting went from highlighting animal welfare to one of economics which was reflective of power shifts of the advocates, with producers and the cattle industry gaining control of the agenda once the ban was put in place. The evidence shows how the media contribute to the political processes (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987) which is highlighted in observing Murdoch's News Limited mastheads and their distinctly anti-Gillard agenda on live export, with Ludwig represented as a poor and ineffective minister and the government in disarray and unmanageable. This push against Gillard included supporting the rise of Rudd and elevating his role in the resumption of the trade.

As mentioned in Chapter One, this professional doctorate thesis sought to consider previous scholarship to arrive at findings that advance professional practice. Therefore, this study provided an evidence-based study, achieved by the documentation of seven findings that will service to inform journalists, public relations professionals, advocates and researchers of those disciplines on the main

influences of federal government policy making. As previously mentioned, choosing the live export industry and events that occurred in 2011 as a case study has offered ample media and political activity to access for the purpose of this research project.

Chapter One, serving as an introduction to the research project, deconstructed the commonly used term policy, and identified that the ability to influence the policy agenda was viewed as an important source of political power by both politicians and advocates alike. It was in this chapter that the structure of the thesis was outlined, and the notion of an interplay of influence began to emerge. This chapter acknowledges previous scholarship that proclaims the enormous power the media yields within the political arena, while identifying a gap in the academic scholarship due to the lack of concrete evidence that easily identifies how the media utilise power and how, in turn, that affects policy decisions in the live export industry. It leads into the literature review in Chapter Two that considers the large body of previous work that academics have undertaken to unpack the role of the media within a democratic society. It would have been remiss not to include within the theoretical framework, consideration of agenda-setting theory as determined in the seminal work of Walter Lippmann (1922), expanded upon by McCombs and Shaw (1972) and Dearing and Rogers (1996).

By considering the numerous theoretical signposts that this research paper acknowledges due to the complexity of the research question, Chapter Two breaks down previous scholarship into relevant topics of study. This includes an investigation into the role the media play within a democracy and the various tools used for media dissemination and accepts the argument that the mass media have become the vehicle for political engagement and a conduit for political messages while maintaining certain control over the messaging.

Chapter Three considers the research design and the choice of methodology and defends the decision to consider a transformative paradigm as a framework for this research, incorporating a social justice orientation and focus on being a voice for the marginalised, a hallmark of advocacy. The research design utilised within this thesis was also unpacked, and a justification for choosing the live export industry and events that occurred in 2011 as a case study was made. This chapter outlined the reasoning behind the June – July 2011 timeframe selected, with newspaper

articles sourced that coincided with policy announcements made by the federal government. These 651 articles were then accessed in terms of themes as indicated in Figure 13 on page 112 of this thesis. Interviews were conducted with 17 respondents (Appendix A), including politicians, journalists, advocates, industry and public relations professionals. From those interviews supporting and corresponding themes were identified. Further evidence of community and political sentiment was collected from the transcripts of parliamentary debates in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, where the only politicians who could speak out against party policy were the independents.

It was important to the findings of this research that the case study chosen was put into a political and historical context, which was achieved in Chapter Four. This chapter also served to outline why and how the case study offered so much potential to provide a blueprint for practitioners and researchers of advocacy, illustrating the importance of the trade and how the reactive change in federal government policy had such wide-ranging adverse effects both nationally and internationally. Importantly, this chapter considered the difference between other live export incidents and what occurred in 2011, and looked at the relationship between the ABC, Animals Australia and the RSPCA. There is no doubt this study exposes a lack of understanding of the damage that the animal activists and the ABC combined could unleash on behalf of the industry and considered the lukewarm efforts to mitigate the fallout from the program in the first instance. Through visual framing and priming, the animal activists and the ABC visualised a deviance from social justice (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987). Not instigating a crisis management plan was a major fault of both the industry²⁶⁵ and, in some respects, the federal Labor government which appeared to limp from one decision to another while under duress (Barrass, 2011b; Benson, 2011a; 2011c).²⁶⁶

A large body of evidence was discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven and included the political, media and community responses to the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011). The textual analysis revealed a narrative that shifted, occurring in

²⁶⁵ Industry spokesperson A; Industry spokesperson B; PR consultant.

²⁶⁶ Coalition politician A, Coalition politician B.

parallel with the policy changes made by the government. The narrative that began with condemnation over the treatment of the cattle quickly changed to one that focused on the financial cost of the ban as illustrated in Figure 17 (p. 119). This occurred due to a switch in media focus from a narrative controlled by the animal advocates to one that favoured industry and Australian farmers facing ruin. The industry became more successful in media priming and generating images of unfairly marginalised farmers in the news. In parallel was the constant reporting within the newspaper media of Labor party tensions and leadership woes. While the backbench proved to be a powerful advocate for the anti-live export industry (Crowe, 2011a, 2011b; Hockley, 2011c, 2011d),²⁶⁷ policy announcements were made to circumvent a potential backbench revolt which would undermine the leadership of Gillard.²⁶⁸

The ability of citizens to exercise control over the actions of their elected representatives is generally regarded as the critical measure of democratic government. This was demonstrated by the actions of the Gillard government in responding to the outpouring of apparent disgust in the public sphere at what was happening in an industry in which the Australian government had a visible presence. The online social movement campaign, organised by GETUP!, Animals Australia and the RSPCA and timed in parallel to the broadcasting of the *Four Corners* program, resulted in an email campaign targeting the country's politicians. To engage the public and raise live export from an issue that was usually advocated upon by those on the social fringe onto the national political agenda, the advocates needed a trigger, in this instance provided by the ABC and advocacy journalist Sarah Ferguson, who showed little impartiality during the program. With editorial skill, they produced a program that was aimed at inciting people into action (Ferguson, 2011) and which hit the target. This research indicates that one of the fundamental reasons why the public and the politicians responded with such vigour in the short term was due to the use of barbaric, intense and extreme visual images, designed to shock. This illustrated how the use of images and news treated as theatre, as

²⁶⁷ Journalist A, Journalist B, Journalist D.

²⁶⁸ Labor politician A; Journalist B; Journalist D; Parliamentary media adviser A; PR consultant.

suggested by Ericson et. al. (1987) and supported by journalists interviewed for this research²⁶⁹ assists in the presentation of arguments in a push for policy change.

Findings show that for a campaign, even with a trigger such as the *Four Corners* program (Ferguson, 2011), to grab the attention of the media and the public, it needs agitation within the political structures that direct change. Advocates view that they need to find the political weak spots within the governing party. In recent Australian political history, such weak spots have been made very evident with leadership changes within the major parties a constant media story. The findings within this thesis have shown that an understanding of the political alliances within the parties can be particularly beneficial when seeking policy change.

Evidence within this study has illustrated the ingredients required to influence policy change at a federal level include making sure all “ducks are in a row” (Benson, 2011a; 2011b), including when to release information to the public to gain maximum impact. This thesis has also shown that the more gruesome and shocking the images used within a campaign, the greater the impact on the public and decision makers, and a greater chance the images and thus the issue will be retained in memory.²⁷⁰ The effects of media priming changed over time, and the industry began to dominate the narrative by using the premise that farming families were hurting. The animal advocates lacked a follow-up argument to counter the industry-led narratives, often in News Corp. Using the live export as a case study, the thesis found that internal party politics was an influence on policy outcomes, allowing both animal and industry advocates to take advantage of a splintered government (Crowe, 2011a; Peake, 2011).²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Journalist A.

²⁷⁰ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Independent politician A; Labor politician A; Labor politician B; Labor politician C.

²⁷¹ Animal activist A; Journalist A; Journalist B; Journalist B; Parliamentary media adviser A; PR consultant.

Evidence showed that there was a mutually dependent relationship between the press gallery and politicians, evident in interviews²⁷² and with reference to an “insider” in newspaper articles. Advocacy journalism was an ingredient in the events that occurred to the live export industry following the *Four Corners* program, “A Bloody Business” (Ferguson, 2011), influenced the backbench which became crucial in policy development. This thesis showed through discussion of the evidence provided via newspaper articles and from interviews particularly with Coalition politicians, that the news of a “crisis” can have a detrimental effect on Australia’s position as a global citizen, in this case as a reliable provider of protein for neighbouring countries (Barrass, 2011b; Gannon, 2011b).²⁷³

As outlined in the introduction, this research demonstrates that it is not only the media that is needed to enable reactive policy change but that a multiple and multi-layered approach must be considered when undertaking successful policy change, one that combines politics, media and community advocacy. This conclusion has been reached by examining newspaper articles, parliamentary debates and interviews with participants integral to the live export crisis of 2011, deconstructing the evidence presented and identifying themes that illustrate the trajectory of the narrative. By applying a transformative paradigm, it has been possible to develop seven findings that will assist professionals involved in a policy change.

This study has opened avenues for further inquiry particularly in relation to the issue of bias within the various media outlets and their alignment with media ownership, which was suggested in Chapter Seven. This in turn feeds into the issue of advocacy journalism’s role on the ABC, which is the taxpayer funded national broadcaster. Establishing a definite trend would make an important contribution to understanding contemporary tensions between government and the ABC (Meade, 2018).

²⁷² Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C; Independent politician A; Journalist B, Journalist C; Journalist D; Labor politician B.

²⁷³ Coalition politician A; Coalition politician B; Coalition politician C.

This thesis argues that while the media are instrumental in policy change, specifically reactive policy variations within the live export industry, the media is not the sole actor in implementing a policy shift. Such change occurs when advocates on either side of an argument view that they are presented with the right conditions allowing them to embark upon a campaign to influence governments' decision-making conditions. These conditions include political instability, drawing on public sentimentality, and placing an emphasis on the economic implications of a policy decision. This study has exposed these factors with the aim of informing professionals in best practice when involved in a policy change or upheaval.

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APPENDIX A

List of Respondents and Dates of Interviews

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Animal activist A (Interviewee) (2016, July 25) - worked as a policy officer with an animal welfare organisation at the heart of the narrative

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Coalition politician A (Interviewee) (2016, December 8) - Western Australian senator, formally a large animal vet

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Coalition politician B (Interviewee) (2016, February 17) - New South Wales backbencher, former federal Minister for Agriculture.

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Coalition politician C (Interviewee) (2016, February 15) Queensland backbencher, former Deputy Speaker. MP for the largest electorate in the state and one that is heavily reliant on cattle production.

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Independent politician A (Interviewee) (2016, February 16) - independent politician from Tasmania

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Industry spokesperson A (Interviewee) (2016, March 28) - feedlot owner and cattle producer from Western Australia and state National Party politician

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Industry spokesperson B (Interviewee) (2016, December 13) - cattle producer from Northern Territory and office bearer of Cattle Council of Australia

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Journalist A (Interviewee) (2016, February 16) - Canberra Press Gallery, rural reporter with Fairfax.

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Journalist B (Interviewee) (2016, May 25) - Canberra Press Gallery, ABC journalist

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Journalist C (Interviewee) (2016, February 4) former ABC then News Corp journalist

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Journalist D (Interviewee) (2016, February 5) - Canberra Press Gallery, Fairfax journalist.

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Labor politician A (Interviewee) (2015, December 8) - Canberra Press Gallery, Fairfax journalist. Electorate in metropolitan Perth that includes the wharfs from where the live export boat departs.

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Labor politician B (Interviewee) (2015, December 11) - Victorian backbencher with an urban electorate – on the backbench agricultural policy committee.

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Labor politician C (Interviewee) (2016, January 30) - Queensland MP – federal cabinet minister at the time of the crisis in 2011. Gillard supporter

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Parliamentary media adviser A (Interviewee) (2016, March 11) - media adviser for a Labor cabinet minister

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Parliamentary media adviser B (Interviewee) (2016, March 13) - media adviser for a coalition shadow Minister



Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

Wade, F. (Interviewer), Public Relations (PR) consultant (Interviewee) (2016, January 4) – hired by the livestock industry. Member of the handpicked team of advertising and marketing experts dubbed ‘The Team’ who elected John Howard and worked on all federal elections for the Liberal Party from 1996-2004

Project Details

Title of Project: Feeding the World: Australia,
Live Export and the Interplay of Influence.

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H15REA243

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Fiona Jane Edwards

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Supervisor Details

Dr Caryn Coatney

Email: caryn.coatney@usq.edu.au

Telephone: 07 3470 4609

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.

- Understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- Understand that a copy of the complete findings will be placed online for use by future researchers and students.
- Understand that if requested you will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview for your perusal and endorsement prior to inclusion of this data in the project.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are over 18 years of age.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.



Participant Information for USQ Research Project Interview

Project Details

Title of Project: Feeding the World: Australia, Live Export and the Interplay of Influence.

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H15REA243

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

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Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Professional Studies Project.

The purpose of this project is to assess the extent of media influence on the live export market. The project will use the case study of the ABC's *Four Corners* episode A Bloody Business in 2011. By using and identifying the role of this televised program in shaping government policies relating to the live export industry, this research aims to answer the question

Who influences federal government policy relevant to the Australian agricultural sector, in particular the live export market, and what are the global implications?

Furthermore, this project will investigate the relations among the media, live export industry, government stakeholders and politicians.

Participation

Your participation will involve participation in an interview that will take no longer than one hour of your time.

As the principal investigator, I would like to interview you about the role of the media in the live export industry in 2011.

The interview will take place at a time and venue that is convenient to you.

Questions will include but are not limited to:

- How did you become aware of the footage used by Four Corners in 2011?
- What was the difference between this footage and other footage of live export?
- What was the public reaction?

The interview will be audio recorded only.

You will not be identified as being a participant in this research.

Interviews will be transcribed by the principal investigator only. Your name will be kept confidential and will not be included in the dissertation. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality and the material stored in password protected computer files and the hard copy will be kept in a filing cabinet. No one else will be involved in collecting and transcribing your interview responses.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You may also request that any data collected about you be destroyed. If you

do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about you, please contact the Research Team at ethics@usq.edu.au

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland.

Expected Benefits

It is expected that this project will not directly benefit you; however, it is anticipated to benefit students of media and politics who wish to have a greater understanding of how and why government policy can be influenced, particularly with relevance to the live export industry?

Risks

Acknowledging that many of us are time poor, the amount of time that you can dedicate to the interview will be negotiated and will not exceed one hour.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

For audio recordings please refer to the information provided below:

- If requested you will have the opportunity to verify your comments and responses prior to final inclusion by contacting the researcher.
- No one else will have access to the recording except the chief investigator.
- Only the chief investigator will be able to access the interview recording.
- You are assured anonymity with non-identifiable data used to maintain confidentiality
- It is possible to participate without being recorded.

- A copy of the complete findings will be placed online for use by future researchers and students.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Consent to Participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to a member of the Research Team prior to participating in your interview.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au. The Ethics Coordinator is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

APPENDIX D

Breaches of Animal Welfare Standards Post-2011

September 2012

Kuwait and Bahrain reject sheep shipments

Hodge, A. (2012). Blame aplenty in Karachi slaughter. *The Weekend Australian*.

Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2021542%22>

Ferguson, S. (2012). Another bloody business, *ABC Four Corners*. Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22emms%2Femms%2F386024%22>

6 September 2012

Supply chain breaches in Kuwait

Brewster, K. (2012). Sheep export bans ignored, transcript, *ABC Lateline*. Retrieved

from [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22emms%2Femms%2F368621%22)

[;query=Id%3A%22emms%2Femms%2F368621%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22emms%2Femms%2F368621%22)

December 2012

Footage of cruelty in Israeli abattoir

The 7:30 program broadcasts footage of cattle being beaten and poked in the eyes and genitals with stun guns at the Bakar Tnuva abattoir in Israel.

Rout, M. and Neales, S. (2012). Slaughter sparks ALP backlash, *The Australian*.

Retrieved from [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2104763%22)

[query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2104763%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2104763%22)

May 2013

Suspension of trade to Egypt

The industry suspends trade with Egypt following the release of footage by Animals Australia of 'systemic and routine abuse' of cattle at the two Egyptian abattoirs accredited under the ESCAS.

Ludwig, J.(2013).Egypt live cattle trade, transcript of interview with Martin Cuddihy, *ABC AM*. Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2104763%22>

October 2013

Supply chain breaches in Jordan

Eastley, J. (2013). Abbott Govt unlikely to place restrictions on live animal exports', transcript, *ABC Canberra 666*. Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22emms%2Femms%2F435809%22>

November/December 2013

Allegations of cruelty in Mauritius and Gaza

Butterly, N.(2013).Video forces inquiry into WA exporter, *The West Australian*, Retrieved from <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2829080%22>

Wilson, L. (2013). New footage of live export cattle slaughter 'harrowing to watch', *The Australian*. Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2892998%22>

January/February 2014

Deaths at Sea

4,000 sheep are reported to have died of heat stress on the *Bader 3*, travelling from Adelaide and Fremantle to the Middle East. Animals Australia and Labor MP Kelvin Thompson call for the licence of the exporter, Livestock Shipping Services (LSS), to be suspended. There are further deaths of sheep and cattle on board the *Ocean Drover* travelling from Fremantle to Israel in February 2014.

Willingham, R. (2014). Calls to suspend exporter's licence over sheep deaths, *Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2946646%22>

14 April 2014

Rogue trader allegations

7:30 program alleges malpractice by exporter

M Peacock, M.(2014).Rogue trader claims put live export industry at risk, *ABC1*.

Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22emms%2Femms%2F458059%22>

22 October 2014

Footage of slaughter outside approved abattoirs

Thompson, B. (2014). Wellard calls halt to Jordan supply, *The West Australian*.

Retrieved from

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F3490181%22>

June 2015

Animals Australia footage in Israeli abattoir

Tillett, A. (2015). Aussie cattle cruelty in Israel, *The West Australian*. Retrieved from <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F3881551%22>

13 October 2015

Animals Australia footage on 7:30

Peacock, M (2015). Live exporter joins animal rights activists in push for Middle East slaughtering procedure enforcement. transcript, 7:30. Retrieved from <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22emms%2Femms%2F587967%22>

January 2016

Ship stranded near Fremantle

Scott, S. (2016). Ship leaves after death of animals. *The Courier Mail*. Retrieved from <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F4289556%22>

June 2016

Animals Australia footage showing cruelty in Vietnam

Thomas, J., Robinson, L. & Armitage, R. (2016). 'Australian cattle' being bludgeoned to death in Vietnam sparks Government investigation', *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-16/australian-cattle-bludgeoned-with-sledgehammer-in-vietnam/7516326>

September 2016

Animals Australia calls for investigation into welfare breaches in Middle East during Eid al Adha.

Locke, S., Worthington, B. (2016) 'Widespread breaches of livestock welfare during Eid festival, Animals Australia claims', *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2016-09-15/eid-investigation-breaches-animals-australia/7848458>

August 2017

Thousands of sheep die in transit Sheep to Kuwait

Coughlan, M and Martin, L. (2018). No breaches on 'shocking' live sheep ship, *The West Australian*. Retrieved from <https://thewest.com.au/lifestyle/no-breaches-on-shocking-live-sheep-ship-ng-s-1861914>

APPENDIX E

Breakdown of Newspaper Data

805 newspaper clippings in the period from May – December 2011

- [11] May
- [441] June
- [210] July
- [89] August
- [14] September
- [26] October
- [5] November
- [9] December

List of mastheads where articles appeared (including Sunday/Weekend editions)

- [42] Advertiser
- [85] Age
- [135] Australian
- [56] Australian Financial Review
- [55] Canberra Times
- [65] Courier-Mail
- [25] Daily Telegraph
- [34] Herald Sun
- [36] Land (NSW)
- [12] Mercury
- [111] Northern Territory News
- [71] Sydney Morning Herald
- [71] West Australian
- [18] Herald and Weekly Times

**Listings of most prolific journalists located in the press gallery during June- July
2011**

- [13] Bettles, Colin
- [19] Burke, Kelly
- [12] Caldwell, Anna
- [17] Coorey, Phillip
- [14] Hockley, Catherine
- [13] Kerin, John, (journalist)
- [11] Pennells, Steve
- [17] Rickard, Jayne
- [48] Rout, Milanda
- [37] Willingham, Richard
- [17] Wilson, Lauren
- [20] Wood, David, (journalist)

APPENDIX F

Parliamentary Sitting Calendar 2011

Winter (Budget) session

- **30 May to 2 June** – House of Representatives sits, Senate Budget Estimates
- **3 to 10 June** – Non-sitting days
- **13 June** – Queen's Birthday (Public Holiday)
- **14 to 16 June** – Both Chambers sit
- **17 June** – Non-sitting day
- **20 to 23 June** – Both Chambers sit
- **27 June to 1 July** – Non-sitting days
- **4 July to 7 July** – Both Chambers sit, Senate 2/3 cut-off on Monday, 4 July
- **8 July to 15 August** – Non-sitting days

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Sitting_Calendar/Text_only_sitting_2011

APPENDIX G

Parliamentary Debate That Mentioned Live Export

Between 30 May – 31 July 2011

House of Representatives

- [7] Adjournment
- [12] Bills
- [2] Committees
- [1] Constituency Statements
- [2] Grievance Debate
- [15] Matters of Public Importance
- [2] Motions
- [2] Notices
- [1] Personal Explanations
- [11] Private Members' Business
- [7] Questions Without Notice
- [3] Statements by Members

Senate

- [1] Adjournment
- [3] Bills
- [7] Matters of Public Importance
- [3] Ministerial Statements
- [2] Motions
- [2] Notices
- [1] Parliamentary Representation
- [19] Questions Without Notice
- [13] Questions Without Notice: Take Note of Answers

APPENDIX H

Prompt Questions

How did the live export crisis in 2011 unfold?

How do you view your role in what happened?

What was the difference between this footage and other such incidents such as Cormo?

Do you believe it was a general feeling for people that for change there needs to be graphic footage?

To be taken seriously by the public/ media/ government at large?

In comparison to other issues – such as refugee policy - where does live export lie in importance for the average Australian Citizen?

Media Specific

How did you find out about the story?

How did you use the media to get your view across? Traditional or social?

Protest media.

Is there a disconnect between new and traditional media? Please explain.

Do you consider traditional media as a tool to strengthen civil society?

Do you consider new media as a tool to strengthen civil society?

Do you believe the program would have had the same effect had social media not been enacted?

In your opinion what would you say was behind the public reaction? Was it just the message? Was it the gruesome footage? Was it the campaign?

Do you think that everything now is event driven in the media?

The players

Animal advocates - what was their role in unfolding events?

What is your view of the press gallery?

What is your view of the ABC and the part it played? Was there evidence of bias?

Was the *Four Corners* program an example of advocacy journalism or investigative journalism?

The political landscape – did it have an effect? Do you think that the hung parliament was important to the events of 2011?

The senate inquiry – your views?

Recent footage – did it have the same effect (Shorten and Abbott say that they would not stop the trade – what is the difference?)

APPENDIX I

Signatories to the *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997*

MOU

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)²⁷⁴

MLA is a research development corporation, representing Australia's livestock producers and invests in marketing campaigns. Their mission is to deliver value to levy payers by investing in initiatives that contribute to producer profitability, sustainability and global competitiveness. MLA's charter does not include advocating to government on behalf of cattle producers. MLA train slaughter men in Indonesia and supplied the Mark 1 slaughter box to abattoirs.

Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp)²⁷⁵

LiveCorp is a not-for-profit industry service provider, funded through statutory levies contributed by livestock exporters. LiveCorp works closely with industry stakeholders to improve animal health and welfare, supply chain efficiency and market access through the provision of technical services and research, development and extension (RD&E).

Australian Livestock Exporters' Council (ALEC)²⁷⁶

ALEC is the peak industry body representing the livestock export sector and is responsible for setting industry policy, providing strategic direction and representing its members at all levels.

Cattle Council of Australia (CCA)²⁷⁷

CCA is the peak producer organisation that advocates to government on behalf of the country's beef cattle producers. A federated organisation, the CCA's eight members are the state farming organisations: NSW Farmers' Association, AgForce,

²⁷⁴ <https://www.mla.com.au/>

²⁷⁵ <http://www.livecorp.com.au/>

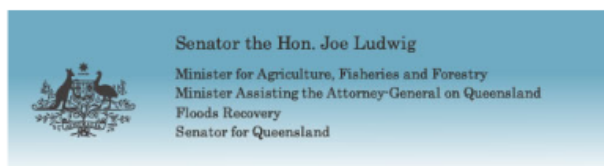
²⁷⁶ <http://auslivestockexport.com/livecorp/>

²⁷⁷ <http://www.cattlecouncil.com.au/>

Victorian Farmers Federation, Western Australian Farmers Federation, Pastoralist's & Graziers' Association of WA. Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association, Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association and Livestock SA.

APPENDIX J-

Statement by The Hon Joe Ludwig – Four Corners (2011)



Statement from Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig - Four Corners

30 May 2011
DAFF 11/167L

This evening the Four Corners program aired evidence of animal welfare mistreatment in Indonesian facilities.

I was shocked by the footage and the treatment of the animals involved.

I have ordered an immediate investigation into the footage by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and have asked them to provide me with all available options in response to the evidence.

I have tonight directed the Department to implement a moratorium on the installation of any new Mark I restraint boxes, as seen being used in the footage. This will apply to the instalment of any new boxes with Commonwealth funds across global markets.

Further, I have asked the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer to coordinate an independent, scientific assessment of the on-going appropriateness of both the Mark I and Mark IV restraint boxes.

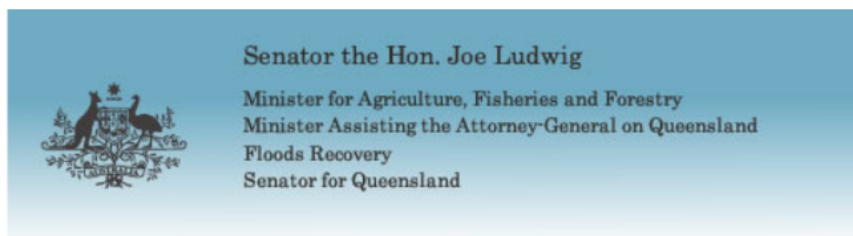
Finally, I have requested a thorough briefing on all of the legislative and regulatory responses available to me for responding to evidence of animal mistreatment, including the banning of trade to specific facilities or destinations.

I asked industry at the beginning of this year for proposals on how welfare outcomes could be improved, particularly after animals arrive in importing countries. I am currently considering these proposals. It is clear that industry reforms to animal welfare standards have not gone far enough or been fast enough and much more needs to be done.

http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/863520/upload_binary/863520.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22Ludwig%20%202010s%202011%2005%22

APPENDIX K

Minister Ludwig Announces Suspension of Trade (2011)



Minister Ludwig announces suspension of trade to certain facilities

31 May 2011

DAFF 11/139L

Minister Ludwig this morning has asked for orders to be prepared that enforce the complete suspension of live animal exports to the facilities identified by the evidence gained by Animals Australia.

"I was provided with the footage by Animals Australia less than 24 hours ago. Last night I announced the Government's initial response to the evidence from Animals Australia and the RSCPA aired on Four Corners last night," Minister Ludwig said.

"I have decided to halt the trade of live animals to the facilities identified by the footage.

"These orders will strengthen the decision I took yesterday to conduct a full investigation into the footage provided.

"Further, I will appoint an independent reviewer to investigate the complete supply chain for live exports up to and including the point of slaughter.

"I reserve the right to add further facilities to the banned list, if required."

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Ludwig%20Dataset%3Apressrel%20Decade%3A%222010s%22%20Year%3A%222011%22%20Month%3A%2205%22;rec=0;resCount=Default>

+