



(left) **Common sense:** Member for the Agricultural Region Member Brian Ellis at an empty feedlot in WA's South West. Like many politicians and industry groups, he has called for common sense on the live trade debate and urged the government to resume supply to accredited abattoirs in Indonesia.

# WA in turmoil over ban on live trade

■ Editorial by Tina Broughton

THE ban on live cattle exports to Indonesia has polarised the agricultural sector this week as politicians and stakeholders scramble to save livelihoods while protecting humane standards.

The overwhelming tide of opinion seems to be to reinstate export services to approved abattoirs while further investigation takes place to develop a strategy to manage cattle slaughter procedures.

As someone who works within the media I have seen both the good and the bad that 'reporting the news' can cause.

The Four Corners story was confronting, horrific at times, but there was a brief moment at the beginning of the expose where reporter Sarah Ferguson noted that there were some slaughterhouses in Indonesia that did follow practices similar to those used in Australia.

This point seems to have been almost completely overlooked by those in favour of the total ban on exports and it is certainly not a point that is driven home during the nearly 45 minute long report – in fact less than 30 seconds is spent talking about the ones

who are doing it right, but of course that's not what the reporter wanted to make a point about.

Ms Ferguson also points out later in the story that Indonesians like Australian beef – it has thicker meat and smaller bones which is apparently the secret of good meatballs – so clearly there is some incentive there for abattoirs to supply Australian meat, not just obtain it from another source (who may not be as concerned about their sickening slaughter techniques).

My point there is that if the well-run slaughter house up the road is supplying Australian beef, presumably at a higher price and demand than other varieties and another isn't because their standards are not acceptable, then there is economic benefit to be gained by improving their practices to be able to take Australian cattle as well.

The decision to ban all live exports to Indonesia was over the top and you have to wonder whether there was some other interests at play because it is possible to force more humane practices without stopping the trade altogether.