

Tasmanian Quality Meats – Animal Welfare Matter

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Tasmanian Quality Meats is deeply concerned about its future and hundreds of Tasmanian jobs after being served with a draft notice from the Federal Government to suspend its export licence.

A suspension could force TQM to close, causing devastating flow-on impacts not only to its 200 workers, but the wider Tasmanian agricultural sector.

“Tasmanian Quality Meats (TQM) is a proud family run business in Cressy that processes and exports premium Tasmanian meats across the world,” TQM owner Jake Oliver said.

“We are committed to upholding the highest levels of animal welfare standards and regard all matters of animal welfare with the upmost importance.

“It appears that activists illegally accessed our facility between August and September this year, installing a number of hidden cameras and subsequently providing the illegally obtained footage to the Government.

“As a result, last Thursday we were made aware of the footage and on Friday we received a notice of intention from the Federal Department of Agriculture, threatening to suspend our export licence and giving us only seven days to respond.

“I would like to stress that we condemn all mistreatment of animals in the strongest possible terms. It is utterly unacceptable and fails to meet the high standards TQM expects.

“Upon becoming aware, we took immediate and significant actions, including:

- Appointed an Animal Welfare Officer;
- Increased Quality Assurance monitoring;
- Purchased a new state of the art stunning system and new restrainer;
- Re-trained all employees on animal welfare obligations; and
- Introduced a Zero Tolerance policy – one strike, you’re out.

“However, we are deeply concerned that before we’ve even been afforded due process and a chance to respond to the allegations, we were served a notice from the Federal Government stating that: ‘I have formed the preliminary view that a period of 12-months would be a reasonable period of suspension’.

“A suspension of our export licence would have a catastrophic impact on our business and staff, and Tasmania’s entire agricultural sector.

“A suspension could force TQM to shut down, putting the jobs of 200 workers at risk. This would be devastating for families across Cressy and Longford who would be left without an income at Christmas, and would result in the loss of many valuable foreign workers.

“This would also send shockwaves across the sector, including Tasmanian lamb and cattle farms, livestock transporters, finished goods transporters, contractors, packaging suppliers, utility companies and the communities that rely on money we spend right here in Tasmania.

“It will also leave Tasmanian farmers with nowhere to process their livestock, as TQM is the state’s only export accredited processor.

“Right now, we have 60,000 sheep and lamb booked in to be processed between now and mid-January, that will grow to around 120,000 by the end of January. Without TQM, these livestock cannot be processed.

“Tasmanian farmers will be forced to scramble, last minute, to find a mainland processor, with many already fully booked out, and pay more to ship their stock across Bass Strait. Or, they will be forced to euthanise animals on farm.”

TQM urges the Commonwealth to uphold due process, to allow TQM to appropriately respond, and consider the broader impacts on Tasmanians and our agricultural sector before they act in the way currently proposed.

“All we’re asking for is a fair go, and we’ll cop what we deserve on the chin,” Mr Oliver said. “But right now, all our workers, every farmer and the entire state is being punished.

“We are more than willing to cooperate fully with a formal and fair investigative process into the allegations made by the animal activists.”

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