

# Ludwig will consider MLA inquiry

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Federal Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig has flagged a possible inquiry into Meat and Livestock Australia provided he receives evidence about the organisation's activities.

The producer-owned company is under fire from livestock-grower groups and graziers over its handling of live exports to Indonesia and what it knew and did about the mistreatment of cattle prior to slaughter.

The government has suspended for six months live exports to Indonesia in response to community outrage following the airing of graphic footage inside a number of abattoirs.

There is also concern that MLA provides funding to groups associated with some of its board members.

"I'll certainly take on board anybody who has any evidence about their conduct and they can be properly investigated," Senator Ludwig told ABC Radio today.

But he said it was more important right now to address the immediate circumstances of cattle producers who no longer had access to the Indonesian market.

"Right now the critical issue is how we ensure we can get the trade back up and running for a sustainable future."

Senator Ludwig when asked avoided giving MLA his vote of confidence.

"There is a range of people who will provide policy advice," he said.

A leading beef cattle producer says the time has come for an urgent review and structural reform of industry organisations.

Bindaree Beef chairman John McDonald described as "deplorable" the response by MLA and LiveCorp to "barbaric Indonesian slaughter methods".

"Our industry organisations are clearly out of touch with the views of their grassroots members on the issue," Mr McDonald has said in a letter to Senator Ludwig.

He warned the entire beef cattle industry would be adversely affected by the suspension of live exports to Indonesia.

"The Australian beef industry cannot afford to allow our Top End cattlemen to be wiped out."

Mr McDonald has called on the government and industry to create a jointly-funded compensation package.

**AAP**