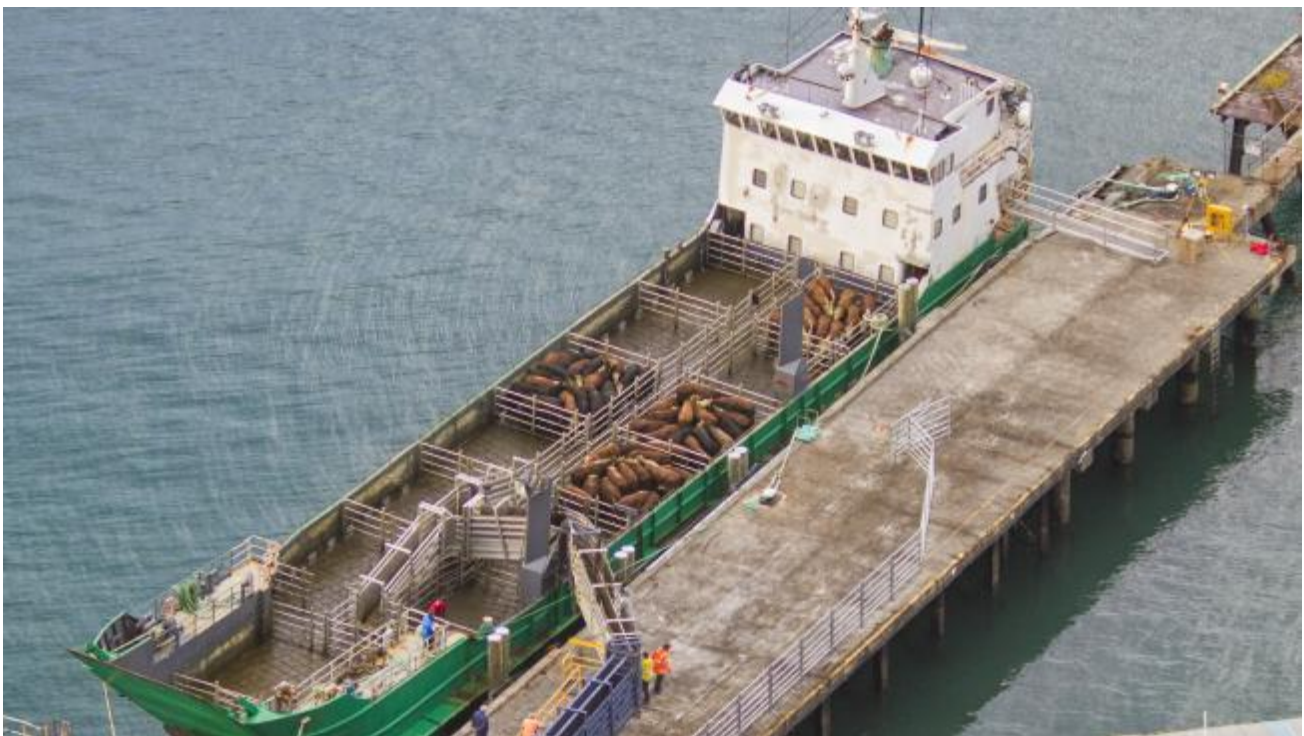


Tasmania

At least 56 cattle died on a Bass Strait voyage sparking outrage

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 KAROLIN MACGREGOR Mercury



Cattle loading on the *Statesman* at Stanley wharf. The open-decked carrier is used to transport thousands of premium cattle each year across Bass Strait. Picture: TARA DUNSTAN

THE death of 59 Tasmanian cattle on a journey over Bass Strait to Victoria has been described as appalling by the State's primary industries minister Jeremy Rockliff.

An investigation by both the Tasmanian and Victorian Governments is now underway into the incident.

The animals were part of a shipment of about 200 that were being transported by locally-owned vessel the *Statesman* from Stanley to Port Welshpool.

On arrival some of the cattle were already deceased and others had to be put down.

"This is an appalling situation," Mr Rockliff said.

“We have Victorian and Tasmanian authorities investigating every aspect of the trip, including should the ship have sailed in the first place given the rough weather.”

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The cattle were being transported to Greenham’s abattoir at Tongala in Victoria for processing.

Operated by LD Shipping the *Statesman* and is an open-deck vessel that is used to ship thousands of cattle across Bass Strait, including premium livestock off King Island, each year.

RSPCA Tasmania chief executive Peter West has called for a ban on the *Statesman* transporting livestock until the investigation is complete.

“Marine transportation of livestock in and out of Tasmania has been occurring regularly and generally safely for decades — but in this instance, something clearly went very wrong,” he said.

“Our understanding is that (government) investigators have commenced an investigation of this incident and we look forward to outcomes from that review, and that the investigation outcomes help prevent repetitions of this type of tragic event.”

Animals Australia campaign director Lyn White has gone a step further saying all live animal shipments from Tasmania should be suspended.

“This is another appalling example of commercial interests being put ahead of the interests of animals,” she said.

“It is reckless and negligent in the extreme for this shipment to have taken to sea knowing that these cattle would face Bass Strait at its worst.”

Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association chief executive Peter Skillern said it was important to wait for the outcome of the current investigation before jumping to conclusions.

“We find this unacceptable, it’s an animal welfare issue and there’s also an economic aspect as well,” he said.

However Mr Skillern said calls by any groups to suspend shipments at this stage would be premature.

“They like us need to wait until the investigation is complete before they would in a position to make any informed decisions or comments,” he said.

The Government says at this stage all the circumstances, including sea conditions during the crossing, are being investigated.

Greenham managing director Peter Greenham has been contacted for comment.

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