



# CATTLE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **BSE: Let's stick to the facts**

The Cattle Council of Australia reassures consumers and cattle producers that a change to BSE import rules will not affect the food safety status of beef in Australia.

Beef producers around the nation were appalled to hear some people from the beef industry on national metropolitan radio spreading unsubstantiated claims that BSE-affected beef will come into Australia.

The Minister for Trade and the Minister for Agriculture have both publically stated that the new arrangements will not affect the Australian food standard which requires that beef and beef products be derived from animals free of BSE. This standard will not change and current enforcement measures will continue to apply.

"It's unfortunate to see people taking political opportunism at the expense of the people and industry that they claim to represent," Mr Brown said.

"What do you think consumers will choose for dinner tonight when they're faced with a choice between beef and chicken? Such a 'beat-up' with the media is completely irresponsible and this behaviour needs to stop," Mr Brown said.

Mr Brown said this was not the first time Australian Beef Association (ABA) had made unsubstantiated claims.

"Most arguments ABA present are black and white for a reason. They fail to go into the detail that's necessary to arise at a robust policy decision that's backed by science and reason," Mr Brown said.

An example is the way that ABA deliberately took information out of context to present a false, but convincing argument to the public that 10 per cent of beef will be imported.

Professor John Matthews assessed the potential risk to Australia from any future importation of beef products from the UK and other "controlled risk" countries, and for his modelling made an assumption that Australia would import no more than 10% of its annual supply of beef products from a "controlled" risk country.

"The 10 per cent figure used by Professor Matthews was simply used for mathematical modelling purposes to calculate risk, completely hypothetical, and ABA used it to claim that 10% of domestic consumption would be imported beef when the policy change is introduced, thus reducing cattle prices by 15 per cent – what a load of nonsense," Mr Brown said.

"The reality is that Australia exports 65% of the beef it produces and relies on international trade.

"The US market imports an average of around 300,000 tonnes of beef each year from Australia. When the U.S. had open access to the Australian market, they sent a mere 34 tonnes of beef per year to this country.

"Cattle Council supports trade based on science and international rules. We would never support action that would 'water down' Australia's strict approach to quarantine or erode consumer confidence in the safety and quality of our beef.

"In the event that the Australian cattle industry ever suffers a trade-limiting disease, we need a solid policy footing to allow us to negotiate our re-entry into exports as soon as possible.

"New Zealand went down this path years ago with their BSE policy and this is a non-issue in their country," concluded Mr Brown.

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