



## Darwin Meat Processing Facility

### Community Update

12 December 2013

The first meeting of the Community Reference Group for the Darwin Beef Processing Facility was held at the Livingstone Valley site last week.

The Reference Group has been formed to facilitate open communication between Northern Australian Beef Limited (NABL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Australian Agricultural Company (AACo), and the broader community.

The Group's membership is drawn from the community around the site, Litchfield Shire Council and technical expertise within NABL. Members are:

- Chair: Stewart Cruden (Northern Australian Beef – NABL)  
Community: Gavin Chambers  
TS Lee  
Anna Malgorzewicz  
Allan McKay  
Mary Pocock  
Brooke Rankmore  
Victor Statham (Litchfield Shire Council representative)  
NABL: Kelly Parkes (NABL technical/ compliance manager)  
Dave Gurrán (NABL engineering manager)  
Justine Shailes (EcOz, environmental consultant)  
Tracy Jones (Creative Territory, community relations consultant)

### Project Update

After a look over the project under construction, the meeting was given an overview of progress by NABL General Manager Stewart Cruden. He said the facility is expected to begin operations sometime between mid July and mid August next year, weather permitting.

He said while some people have perceptions of how this facility will operate based on the old-style abattoir, this new project will be a state-of-the-art, world-class facility that will be a good neighbour and a good corporate citizen.



“Protecting the environment is very important to AACo,” he said

“It is Australia’s oldest company and is in the business of cattle production. Its strength is in looking after the land and environment so its operations are sustainable.”

In terms of the project construction, this is proceeding well. All major contracts are now in place. Darwin-based Thinc is the project manager while long-term Territory company Sunbuild is managing construction. The major supply contracts have been awarded for specialist equipment including the slaughter and boning rooms, freezers and chillers, rendering plant and waste water treatment plant.

There are also contracts covering the supply of gas and cogeneration power station as well as associated road and railway crossing works.

Environmental monitoring is in place including an extensive ground and surface water monitoring program, which will continue throughout the operation of the facility.

## **Questions and Feedback**

Members raised a number of questions and provided feedback from the community. This is summarised below along with responses from AACo.

### **Can you confirm that the project will go ahead?**

Absolutely. We did have a slow down earlier in the year but as anyone can see on site now we are moving ahead at full steam.

### **What are you doing to improve traffic access and flow?**

Firstly, the only access in and out of the site will be via the Stuart Highway as we do not believe in increasing traffic on local residential roads.

A Traffic Study Report was required for the EDP Approval Process and a number of improvements will be made to the highway in front of the site, including lighting and the construction of a much longer turning lane. The 130 km/h speed limit has already been moved to south of the site.

The entrance to the site will be realigned so there is a straight line of site for people crossing the railway line. This crossing will also be improved and there will be plenty of room for road trains to wait for trains if necessary.

The other thing we will be doing is spacing road trains during the day. This will allow us to load and unload in an orderly fashion as well as ensure there is no congestion.

### **How will you be attracting processing staff to the project?**

We will begin advertising for positions in late March next year using both the media as well as our email database. The first operational employees are expected to begin in July.

### **What type of people will you be looking for?**

We will be looking to employ trained butchers and boners and these will make up about 14 of the positions. Most of the remaining workers will be trained by us, so they do not require any specific skills. Training will take four weeks.

### **If you are employing butchers with Halal qualifications, will you have a Mosque on site for them?**

We will be making accommodation for a small prayer room within the processing facility area.

**Will accommodation be provided for staff on site?**

No. It is our intention that our workforce will be primarily existing residents in the local area and Darwin. Anyone who does win a job from interstate can be accommodated privately.

**Is there a priority for local employees?**

We want to employ as many local people as possible. Locals have a commitment to their community and are more likely to become long-term employees.

**Is there an age limit for the staff?**

As long as people are able to make a contribution, we believe people of all ages should have the opportunity to work with us.

**Are you open to having school-based apprenticeships available?**

Yes.

**Will you be looking to employ women?**

Our initial research and feedback confirms that there are a lot of women interested in working at our facility, and we're certainly looking at ways we can facilitate that, with flexible shifts, job sharing and the like.

**How will you cater for child care requirements?**

We've said all along that we would like to have a community facility on our site that includes a child care centre for both our staff and others in the surrounding community. Funding has been difficult to obtain for this aspect of the project but how we can make that happen is still under discussion.

**Is there a similar facility existing in Australia?**

Yes. At Throsby in NSW.

**What is the breakdown of the workforce there in terms of gender?**

I think around 50-60% male, but that doesn't necessarily translate to what it may be here.

**What will be the hours of operation?**

We are looking at two shifts, the first from 6am to around 3pm and the second from around 3pm to midnight. This may change slightly depending on how we put our workforce together.

**If you have a community centre on site, will this be available to the public?**

Yes. If the community centre goes ahead it will be on the highway side of the railway line and would be available to the broader community.

**Will environmental information be available to the community?**

Yes. We will be making our water monitoring information available to the Community Reference Group as well as putting it on our website.

### **How will you be raising community awareness of the project?**

We have been getting information out to the community through our Community Updates, which have been sent to everyone on our email database as well as made available in local electorate offices.

As the project now takes shape, we will doing more to inform the community including having some open days for people to come and look at how work is progressing.

People can join the email database via our website at [www.aacont.com.au](http://www.aacont.com.au) or by emailing [tracy@creativeterritory.com](mailto:tracy@creativeterritory.com)