

I've never been a double agent.

I want to bring to your attention an article in The Australian today and the associated allegations that I am engaged to do investigation work for Animals Australia. This article has been generated by a disgraced guy from the greyhound industry who has expressed his determination to do my family and me maximum harm.

First some background, and please hold off on judgments until I explain. Some of you will know that in recent years I was engaged by World Animal Protection (formerly WSPA) to do some training and infrastructure upgrades in Indonesia. On their recommendation, I was then asked by the Princess Alia Foundation/Animals Australia to do some abattoir work in Jordan. I have also done pig abattoir work in Vietnam for WSPA.

There are many views on Animals Australia which is completely understandable since they oppose an industry that a number of us have worked for many years. However, I also know there is a grudging respect for them from many cattle and sheep producers for bringing to light issues that ensured exported animals would be treated more humanely.

Having worked for MLA as a trainer in overseas markets, I have personally witnessed the extent of mistreatment of exported animals, and the importance of Animals Australia's work in applying the pressure to right those wrongs.

For this reason, when I was asked to do abattoir improvements for them in Jordan and to help out tracing illegally exported greyhounds whilst I was doing some work in SE Asia, I didn't hesitate. I mean, who amongst us does not want to be involved in animal welfare improvements. I'm a dog lover from way back and was always willing to assist in dog related issues. The insight I gained into how Animals Australia worked, increased my understanding and respect. They are not rabid tree-huggers as many in our industry would like to think, they are committed to doing whatever they can in the moment to reduce animal suffering.

A couple of months ago I was asked by AA whether I would be prepared to handle a difficult informant from the greyhound racing industry in Victoria who wanted to come clean about the doping of greyhounds and race fixing. 'Difficult' doesn't quite cover Charlie Wilson, he has been associated with some of Australia's most colourful criminal identities. Animals Australia were extremely nervous of him but what he was alleging in terms of widespread dog drugging, race fixing and animal cruelty led them to believe that they had no choice but to look into his allegations.

To assist me in building a relationship with him, the email was sent to him that has been printed in The Australian this morning. I was introduced as an "Animals Australia investigator" rather than a livestock consultant in the interests of creating camaraderie and having something in common with a guy who was going to spill the beans on his own industry.

During the past month whilst on this investigation, I went from being Wilson's 'best mate' to being (for no reason) subjected to intimidation and threats relating to my family's well-being. The last few weeks have been spent seeking an appropriate exit strategy from him whereby no-one would be at risk.

Wilson was unhappy with a decision taken by Animals Australia to lodge evidence of a major trainer doping his dogs with Greyhound Racing Victoria. He had wanted the media spotlight. He declared himself a double agent – with the goal of bringing AA down.

Regardless of how worthy you may think this goal is, my family and I have got caught up in the slipstream. The greyhound industry has turned on him. Wilson thinks by making me a target with my own industry, the focus will be off of him and on me.

Claims that he is making to support this goal, such as that I was behind a 'Bloody business' (4 Corners TV show) in 2011 are complete rubbish as most of you will know. I am proud to say I played a pivotal role in the implementation of ESCAS and training and upskilling of workers in import markets around the world at this time.

Some of you might question my loyalty in doing work for AA, but as everyone in the industry knows, I have never spoken out publicly about the animal suffering I witnessed during my multitude of voyages as a stockman aboard livestock vessels or during work as an MLA trainer in importing countries. I have always worked quietly trying to change things, whether engaged by MLA or animal protection groups. However, I also know that what gets said by industry and what gets done are at times two different things. If your goal is to stop Australian cattle being bludgeoned to death in Vietnam, you don't go to industry. I learned that first hand. Their first thought understandably will be mitigating damage and commercial ramifications. Working in this industry we are happy to be convinced by our own PR lines, but deep down we all know differently.

Everything that Charlie Wilson has done in recent days to bring harm upon my family is regrettable, but I don't regret that he has put me in a position where I needed to explain the work I have been doing and why.

Bottom line, the future of live export or any other animal industry depends on animals being treated humanely, and this is where my focus has been. For any who consider me misguided, I will accept that and that friendship's may be lost, likely work opportunities as well, but I'd had a gut full of witnessing preventable cruelty. So many who work in the live export trade have become hardened to it and now accept it. I couldn't continue to do so.

I'm not sure what is going to rain down on me now in conveying all of this. Please take into account that my family has already been subjected to so much due to the actions of an unhinged individual from the greyhound industry. I hope that those within the industry understand that in a field as small as Animal Welfare, paths between industry groups and NGO's seeking animal welfare improvements are always going to cross and for most of us we share a common goal in achieving a certain end result.