

To whom it may concern,

We are a small free-range chemical free heritage breed pig and goat farm in far north Queensland. (We are very proud to say) we were the only meat producer in Queensland to make the ABC delicious produce finals last year in a competition of over 3000 entrants. We are about looking after the land, our animals and our community.

It has been an up-hill struggle to keep our operation going. When we started, our local abattoir closed, just as we were ready to use its facilities. The closest slaughterhouse then was a 4-hour drive each way to drop our animals off.

After spending so much time making sure our animals have(had) plenty of space, grass and a low stress environment, this was not ideal. To top that off we could not get the carcass truck to stop in our town, which meant that we had to have our animals processed in Gayandah, Southern Qld. The cost of petrol and shipping nearly sent us to the wall.

With the help of our local community we were able to reopen our local abattoir and build an on site butchery and smoke house.

Our facilities are now used by 6 local farmers with more approaching us all the time.

The problems we now face are the extremely high licensing fees. In the last eight months we have paid out over \$8000 in licensing fees! With more charges to pay over the next few months.

Safe Food QLD insisted on charging us for a full years license even though we only got 6 months use out of it. They also insisted we pay two processing licenses at a cost of \$3000 because our operation was on two sites, even though the same operation in Winton Qld only pays one processing license. Safe Food also likes to charge you a desk top audit of \$250 per hour for your food safe practices manual from AMIC which has already been approved by them. This is highway robbery at its finest. We have an e- mail saying that SafeFood Qld is doing its best to help ease the licensing fees for small businesses. We have seen no evidence of this.

SafeFood is unwilling to discuss the matter any further with us or to work with us to find a solution. They have said it is not their problem and they are not here to help us.

In a community like ours where businesses are only closing down and people are leaving town, we are trying to affect change by employing men over 55, training apprentices and people to have more skills.

If we keep paying these over- inflated charges we will go out of business sooner rather than later. If this happens it will affect the other 6 farmers who rely on us to process and sell their animals. It will also put the middle-aged guys and our apprentice out of work without having finished their training. And we will be

forced to sell up and move out of town. This, in a district of less than 5000 people, is major.

We are trying to create jobs and opportunities that will benefit young and old in our town for years to come.

Small local operations like ours are vital for small communities like ours. All the money stays in the town, local people have jobs and gain more skills and best of all local people get to eat the best of local produce.

We would love it if on your tour through Queensland, as you are passing, you could take the time to stop, see our operation and have a chat.

Yours sincerely

Julia Powell

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