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Abattoir kills with kindness

By **CAMILLE SMITH**

AUSTRALIA'S first mobile abattoir is on schedule to roll into operation in the NSW Riverina next month.

Designed and built by red meat company Provenir, the bespoke semi-trailer abattoir is in the final days of construction in Perth and will then make the 4500km journey to Victoria and on to NSW, where it will be audited and licensed for commercial operation.

Provenir co-founder Chris Balazs said the innovative system eliminated the need for live transport from farms to abattoirs, decreasing animal stress, increasing meat quality and improving traceability for consumers.

"As a farmer myself, I hate loading my livestock on to the back of a truck," Chris said. "I work so hard to get them in top condition only to risk losing it all to a bad trip.

"Mobile processing makes so much sense, for farmers, for livestock and for consumers."

The slaughter unit will operate on farms and be manned by four people, including a qualified meat inspector. A second refrigerated trailer will

transport processed carcasses and the "non-edible resources", such as heads, hoofs and offal, off farms.

Chris said Provenir had lined up buyers for everything from premium cuts to hides and blood.

Pioneering Swedish farmer Britt-Marie Stegs mentored Provenir during the

unit's development.

Britt-Marie founded Europe's first mobile abattoir

company, Halsingestintan, four years ago because she wanted to "end painful animal transport". Halsingestintan now processes animals from 25 producers and sells the meat packaged with QR codes that allow consumers to trace each cut to an individual farm.

"Meat production in the world is so centralised and concentrated in big farms and big slaughteries," Britt-Marie

said. "I think this is a really good disruptive thing to farm from another angle.

"An increasing group of people are willing to pay a price premium if they are sure the animals have been treated well.

"Because of visible traceability, we connect the farmer to the consumer in a very direct way."

Provenir is developing a smartphone-accessible "digital provenance platform".

Provenir has partnered with more than 10 farmers in the Riverina to buy and process their livestock on farm, producing meat to sell under the company's premium brand. "We are looking at bricks and mortar retail partners where we can supply directly and we have quite a queue of top-end restaurants that are keen to see the meat quality of non-stressed meat,"

Chris said.

Provenir will give consumers the chance to pre-purchase meat through a crowd-

funding campaign that will launch next Wednesday.

Though Chris rears his cattle at Bannockburn he said the unit would start operations in NSW due to the premium quality cattle available, keen farmer support and state legislation that allowed vehicles to operate as abattoirs.



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Welfare a priority: Britt-Marie Stegs and Chris Balazs from Provenir who are launching their mobile abattoir, inset.