

Answers to supplementary questions on behalf of:  
**Dr Jed Goodfellow, Australian Alliance for Animals**  
**Mr Ben Pearson, World Animal Protection**

- (1) How can the Alliance claim to represent the public interest when it is largely supported by activist groups with pre-existing biases against live exports?**

The Alliance members' collective supporter base consists of over 2 million Australians, and polling conducted over the course of a decade indicates that over 70% of Australians support the phase out of live sheep exports.

- (2) Why does the submission downplay the significant welfare improvements made by the live export industry since 2018?**

Sheep continue to suffer prolonged heat stress on over 60% of voyages and are still slaughtered without stunning in the Middle East. They continue to be exposed to a range of other welfare challenges and risk as outlined in [section 2 of our submission](#). Some of these practices, such as slaughter without stunning, would be illegal if it took place in Australian export registered abattoirs. Sheep slaughtered in Australian export abattoirs, even under Halal certification, are required to be stunned during the slaughter process.

- (3) If these reforms aren't enough, what specific measures would you proposed instead of a total ban?**

The welfare issues in the live sheep export trade are intractable. They are the product of Australian Merino physiology, climate, and deeply held cultural practices that insist on slaughter without stunning. They are inherent to the trade and cannot be overcome through changes to regulations or industry practices. The fact that the industry has not been able to address these issues, even as it faces legislative phase out, provides further evidence of this point. In fact, the industry invested millions of dollars in 2018 (including with public funding) to trial dehumidification technology on the decks of livestock carriers only to conclude that it was not commercially feasible. For these reasons, the only option to protect animal welfare when it comes to the live sheep export trade, is to transition away from the trade towards domestic processing.

- (4) The submission dismisses mortality rates as a measure of welfare—what alternative metrics should the industry use?**

There are a number of robust and scientifically validated frameworks for welfare assessment, including the [Five Domains model](#).

A key recommendation of the [2018 McCarthy Review](#) was for the live export industry to move away from using mortality rates as a measure of its performance. McCarthy stated:

“It is time for the industry to come together as a whole, and place a much stronger emphasis on animal welfare and move away from measures that use mortality as a benchmark.”

The fact that the industry is still relying on mortality rates today to suggest animal welfare is good provides further evidence that it has not learnt from its mistakes of the past.

- (5) How do you justify ignoring declining mortality when it directly reflects improved conditions?**

Suggesting that a fraction of one percent change in mortality rates reflects “improved conditions” again highlights the fact industry has not changed or learnt the lessons of previous disasters. The biggest factor behind the decline in mortality rates is the prohibited trading period between May and October. This has reduced mortalities within the trade more than any other measure.

**(6) Could rejecting this metric undermine progress in measuring animal welfare outcomes in all settings?**

No. On the contrary, adopting this metric as the primary measure of the industry’s performance is what is undermining progress, and this is precisely why the industry is in the mess it is in today.

**(7) How does abandoning these overseas markets help animals when less-regulated countries will fill the gap?**

There are multiple reasons for why phasing out the trade from Australia will lead to a net improvement to welfare outcomes:

1. Most of the other nations that supply live animals to the Middle East are within the same hemisphere and climatic zones as the importing countries. Sheep from these countries are of a different breed and are adapted to the climatic conditions in the region
2. Sheep exported from these nations are not subjected to the same journey times nor the extreme changes in climatic conditions associated with travelling into different hemispheres
3. The sheep from many of these countries will be slaughtered without stunning whether they are processed locally or exported, while Australian sheep, if processed locally, would receive the benefit of stunning.

These factors will lead to a net increase in welfare outcomes with the phasing out of the Australian trade. In addition to this, phasing out the trade will send an important signal to the market and world about Australia’s commitment to animal welfare and sustainable agricultural practices. Australia will be joining other nations such as New Zealand and the UK in taking this stance, and as additional countries enact similar phase outs it will accelerate the transition to chilled and frozen meat trade.

**(8) The Alliance promotes chilled meat as a replacement for live exports—how realistic is this given infrastructure limitations in importing countries?**

The claim that the Middle East lacks refrigeration and cold supply chains is false. Australia already exports \$1.2 billion worth of sheep meat to the Middle East alone ([Rural Bank, 2024](#)). Even if all sheep currently exported live to the Middle East were instead processed locally with the meat exported, it would equate to a small fraction of the annual sheep meat exports to the region and would be easily absorbed within current Middle Eastern supply chains.

**(9) How do you address the lack of refrigeration facilities in rural areas of the Middle East?**

See above response to question 8.

**(10) How does ending live exports position Australia to lead global welfare standards if we’re no longer a major player in these markets?**

It sends a strong signal to markets and trading partners about Australia’s commitment to animal welfare and sustainable agriculture practices. Australia can also influence global standards of

animal welfare through international forums like the World Organisation for Animal Health and through bilateral trade agreements. In fact, Australia recently signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the UAE which contains obligations around animal welfare and improving standards. This was the first ever trade agreement with a Middle Eastern nation containing animal welfare obligations. This is how Australia can have a positive influence on animal welfare globally, not by participating in a trade that is inherently cruel.

**(11) Wouldn't withdrawal from the trade reduce our influence in setting international standards?**

No, see above.

**(12) The report "Live Exports and the Australian Community 2024" published by Livecorp and VoconiQ was cited during the inquiry as demonstrating community support for the live export industry. What are your thoughts on this report? Does it indicate community support for the continuation of live exports? Please give details about why you think it does or does not give an accurate indication of community sentiment on live exports. Do you have any additional thoughts about this report or any concerns about the committee relying on the data contained in the report?**

Our thoughts on this report are that it is leading in its design and does not give an accurate indication of community sentiment. This is because the survey presents a series of "value propositions" to respondents about the benefits of the trade. These value propositions reflect industry talking points and do not present information about the benefits of transitioning away from live exports in terms of the significant value adding, jobs creation, and animal welfare benefits.

When respondents are asked a straight question – 'do you or do you not support the phase out of live sheep export?' More than 7 in 10 Australians say 'yes'. This has been shown in multiple polls and surveys over the last decade. Even in Western Australia, a poll by McCrindle Research in May 2023 found that 71% of Western Australians supported the phase out ([The West Australia, 2023](#)).

**(13) There was a suggestion from a witness that if the Australian live export industry is phased out, it would push importing countries into sourcing from countries where there are lower animal welfare standards and that therefore, keeping live exports from Australia is better for animal welfare. What is your response to this?**

See response to question 7 above.

**(14) In their submissions, the Australian Live Export Council has claimed that the live sheep export industry's performance on animal welfare is "exemplary", and Sheep Producers Australia have said the live export industry has the "highest standards of animal welfare in the world". What is your response to these claims – are they true, and if not, why not?**

We disagree with these statements for the reasons outlined in section 2 of [our submission to the inquiry](#).