

**Submission
No 27**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE PHASE-OUT OF
AUSTRALIAN LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA ON NEW
SOUTH WALES**

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Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. Apologies for the slow introduction, but hopefully it explains my attitude.

As an child, growing up in New Zealand in the 1960s, I did not think too much about where my food came from. Despite my father and grandfather growing up on a farm, and having family friends working on farms, all we saw were cute little lambs being cared for, cattle grazing in green fields, and on a mixed farm, a few cows being milked and the dogs and an occasional cat and some orphan lambs getting some milk.

My husband, an electrical engineer, spent some of his summer holiday working at the local freezing works in the early 1980s, where we were exporting meat to countries that required Halal slaughter. He describes orderly stunning prior to slaughter so that the animals did not appear to know what was happening. I could say more about what we see in Australia today, but this is hopefully a minority situation, and not the place to discuss it.

Overall, there was a sense of the long and hard days worked by farmers, having to be there on the farm, with few opportunities for holidays, and not much of a profit. Still into adulthood, I think many people believe that the meat that they buy in the supermarket comes from animals who had a good life, and a relatively pain free and stressless death, and they are ok with that. Alternatively they may not think at all.

The reality may be somewhat different, but it is another step although when animals (who have cognitive ability, sensations, (pain, cold, distress, suffocation) and demonstrated ability to show happiness and fear, are treated with cruelty. This cruelty affects the animals but also those who inflict cruelty (and not for good.)

Over times of drought, we have seen the mental health of people who work on the land really suffer, but there are (hopefully) not many farmers who would support deliberate cruelty. Many people have rallied to support farmers as much as possible, out of empathy and the belief that we all deserve a "fair go".

Shipping of live animals has clearly shown to cause extreme suffering: heat, dehydration, illnesses, unsanitary conditions. We have seen sheep suffocating. We have learned that there is not sufficient veterinary care on board. Sometimes these voyages are delayed, and this is especially so with the current world situation. The number of deaths is considered "wastage"- but these are lives we are discussing, not a left over lettuce leaf!

Once arriving in countries (where we have absolutely no control) where it appears that animal welfare is even lower on the priorities than here, we hav witnessed dreadful scened of bulls being hit repeatedly by sledgehammers, sheep being dragged along the road or having their throats hacked to pieces.

We do not have to all sink to the lowest common denominator. We here in Australia have problems , that is true, but we also have riches beyond measure compared to other places, yet we take them for granted, and risk becoming a hard hearted and uncaring nation where it is no longer "mate ship" and a "fair go" (more of a NZ thing) but who can scabble on top of someone else at any cost to get something for themselves.

We can chose the high road, where we don't turn away and we appreciate the real cost of our food-in terms of the work of farmers, and graziers, and the welfare of animals. We can choose to look at the food we buy and understand what it took it get it to us (COVID taught us some of that). We can choose to stand for animal welfare and decency, while at the same

time investing in research into ways to provide security for farmers-exploring alternative markets, plant based agriculture, improved outcomes for health and wellbeing of Australians, and a more ethical way to treat each other and the animals we share this planet with.

New Zealand and the UK have moved to ban live export, and I applaud this.

I apologise if I have written this poorly, but I think that most people, if actually confronted with what happens to Australian animals, would recoil in horror. Those who put their "party line" above common decency; or those whose experiences of cruelty have hardened them to suffering; or those who can tolerate/enjoy causing harm to animals are hopefully in the minority. If not, we are in a bad place!