

**Submission
No 29**

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

Name: Dr Liam Milton-McGurk

Date Received: 19 September 2024

Dear Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the continued ban on live animal exports. This submission aims to highlight the ethical importance of the ban, grounded in the principles of animal welfare and moral responsibility.

Equal Consideration of Interests

At the core of a just society lies the principle of equal consideration of interests. This principle asserts that the interests of all beings capable of suffering should be given appropriate weight, regardless of species. Animals, like humans, have the capacity to experience pain, fear, and distress, and this must be weighed against any purported benefits to humans. To paraphrase a famous Australian philosopher, if a being can suffer, there is no justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration (Singer 1946).

Note that this does not imply that all animals (including humans) should have exactly the same rights, but rather that we must consider the interests of the specific animal species in question. For example, virtually all animals (including sheep) require enough space to move around, be at a comfortable temperature, and to not experience pain. Humans have these same interests, although the exact space and temperature required for our comfort may differ.

The Moral Cost of Live Export

The practice of live animal export subjects countless animals to conditions that cause significant suffering. During long voyages, animals often endure overcrowding, extreme temperatures, and inadequate access to food and water. The stress and physical hardships can lead to illness, injury, and death. Upon arrival, they may face handling and slaughter methods that fall below Australian welfare standards.

This suffering is not a mere byproduct of the industry—it is inherent to it. No regulatory framework has effectively mitigated these issues, as the complexities of international transport and differing welfare standards abroad render complete oversight unfeasible.

The Insufficiency of Economic Arguments

While economic considerations are important, they do not nullify our moral obligations. The benefits accrued by the live export industry do not justify the substantial harm inflicted upon sentient beings. Profit should not come at the expense of ethical responsibility, and the Australian public agrees with this. Moreover, alternative industries and practices, such as chilled and frozen meat exports, can provide economic opportunities with fewer compromises to animal welfare.

The Imperative to Prevent Unnecessary Suffering

Allowing the live export of animals when we are aware of the suffering it causes is ethically indefensible. To do so is to prioritise the economic interests of the few over the basic welfare of the many. By maintaining the ban, Australia affirms its commitment to ethical practices that respect the intrinsic value of all sentient beings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the live export ban is a necessary measure to prevent unnecessary suffering and to uphold our moral responsibilities toward animals. I urge the inquiry to consider the ethical implications of lifting the ban and to recognise that the basic welfare of sentient beings should not be compromised.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Regards,

Dr Liam Milton-McGurk