

Submission
No 45

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

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Submission re Impact of the phase-out of Australian Live Sheep Exports by sea on NSW

The global live export trade has been built on the suffering of sentient beings, sending animals on risky journeys halfway around the world just to be killed for their flesh and in the most barbaric ways. Live export is not only cruel, unethical and outdated, it is environmentally unsustainable and totally unnecessary.

The live export of sheep by sea causes extensive and drawn out suffering to animals, unacceptable death rates, barbaric treatment and horrific methods of slaughter in destination countries, something I would think that NSW farmers would consider unacceptable treatment of the animals they raise. If farmers have no concerns for animal welfare and in fact put profits above welfare then I am of the opinion that they should not have animals under their care. Our Government should not be supporting cruelty to animals under any circumstances. I find it incredibly sad that The NSW Government even need to hold this Inquiry, that they are so out of touch with the public's wishes to ban this outdated and cruel industry, and that there is any desire to support an unethical and unsustainable industry which harms the environment as well.

Western Australia accounts for 99% of Australia's live sheep exports. Yet polling commissioned by the RSPCA found more than 70% of Western Australians were in favour of a ban.

a) evaluate the economic impact of phasing out live sheep exports on New South Wales sheep producers and related supply chains in regional towns

The phasing out of live sheep exports is about phasing out extreme cruelty to animals. Economic importance should never trump animal welfare. It is because animals are used and abused for profits that animal welfare laws are often exempted and animal welfare takes a back seat which only results in harm to animals and at the same time harm to the human psyche. Businesses that derive profit from harming animals do not have a social license and need to reevaluate their moral compass. I live in a regional town and wish to be surrounded by ethical and sustainable businesses and their supply chains.

But even if you do not take animal welfare seriously, and you are concerned about there being no live sheep export industry, sheep producers will still be able to raise sheep and find markets. These sheep will still need to be transported and also killed locally which means even more jobs for Australians. However if you take the current epidemic of domestic violence seriously, you would also reconsider all the jobs involving the killing and harm to animals as this has been proven to have

huge psychological effects and numbing of violence and actually leads to more violence in our society. This gruesome murder in Tenterfield NSW is a perfect example. <https://7news.com.au/news/crime/katherine-knight-butchers-husband-john-price-then-boils-his-head-and-plates-him-up-c-1852824>

I live in a regional town and I would feel much safer knowing I am not surrounded by people who kill for a living. Consumers like myself increasingly demand humane treatment of animals and producers can only benefit from being aligned with community expectations.

(d) examine whether the phase-out of live sheep exports by sea will have any impact on NSW Government revenue and bottom line

The NSW Government should not be putting revenue ahead of incredibly cruel, outdated barbaric practices which do not have a social license. The NSW Government should not be in the business of making revenue from supporting the suffering of animals.

(g) examine animal welfare concerns relevant to the determination to cease live sheep export by sea by the Federal Government

Animals exported from Australia face extended periods at sea, which increases their exposure to heat stress, dehydration and severe health and welfare issues including death. Even with stringent regulatory measures, the long voyages, particularly through tropical regions, pose significant challenges that cannot be fully mitigated. At every stage these animals suffer.

Animals are often subjected to extreme conditions and cruel practices and rough handling in foreign countries is commonplace.

Ships are not cleaned during voyages, causing unsanitary and harmful living conditions, where the sheep are confined to living in excrement and the perfect environment for zoonotic diseases.

Ship accidents can result in the drowning of animals and loss of human life.

Consistent animal welfare standards across borders are hard to maintain.

New Zealand suspended the export of live sheep for slaughter following the disaster of an Australian voyage in 2003 as they did not want to risk a bad reputation to their own country. The ship left with 58,000 sheep destined for Saudi Arabia. However, Saudi Arabia rejected the ship on arrival as they alleged disease was evident in the sheep. A mechanical breakdown then led to a fire on the ship. After 79 days on board the ship, the sheep were unloaded in Eritrea and by then 6,000 were dead.

There are so many horror stories from this industry, it is time for it to end.

(h) examine the impact to local meat processors

Local meat processors can only benefit from the end of live sheep exports as there will be much greater demand locally for their services.

(l) identify case studies of graziers in other regions or countries that have successfully transitioned from live exports

Several regions have successfully phased out live exports by investing in local processing and other humane alternatives. New Zealand's move to end live exports by sea has been met with positive outcomes for animal welfare and the industry alike. We can learn from these examples and develop strategies that both protect animal welfare and support our farmers.

(m) examine alternative income streams for New South Wales sheep producers

Alternative markets such as the expansion of chilled and frozen export markets need to be explored and can benefit both animal welfare and the economy, supporting a transition for farmers and associated industries.

I fully support research and development of alternative industries that do not rely on animal exploitation. This could include plant-based agriculture, which could also offer new economic opportunities for regional communities.

Developing lab-grown meat and other animal products, as well as plant-based products can be successful and humane alternatives to live export.

Whilst transitioning from live exports, animal welfare should be a high priority and the production of lab-grown meat and other animal products could not only circumvent the ethical issues associated with live animal transport but also offer a way to meet demand sustainably.

I have researched alternatives like plant-based agriculture and lab-grown meat and they provide a promising answer to the harm caused to animals during transport and slaughter and also the environmental harm caused by animal agribusiness. These methods could offer a more ethical solution to live exports.

In 2024, 'meat reducer' has become the most popular dietary choice among Australians, with 21% of the population adopting it. This choice is driven by increasing awareness of the health and environmental benefits associated with eating less meat. The findings are from a Food Frontier consumer survey by research company Toluna which undertook a nationally representative survey of 2,000 people across Australia to explore their dietary preferences.

<https://healing.echo.net.au/australias-most-popular-diets-in-2024/>

(n) examine community views in New South Wales of the live export industry

I am one of the many community members in NSW who find it unfathomable that the vile live export trade even exists, for multiple reasons. It is totally unnecessary to be subjecting these poor sentient beings to such long journeys by sea, in cramped unsanitary conditions where many die from heat stress and the entire journey is spent living in an unnatural setting in their own excrement with bad ventilation, only to be killed at the other end on the other side of the world, treated in the most appalling ways, such as being tied up on top of cars, or crammed into boots, hauled off and slaughtered in the most barbaric ways. The majority of NSW residents see this industry as belonging in the dark ages. I do not personally know anyone who thinks it is ok to continue this hideous industry and I find it distressing time and time again to hear the horror stories and see the images of animals suffering in this industry. There are plenty of other ways to make a living other than off the back of misery to animals.

I live in rural northern NSW and I can assure you that many people in my community have been gravely concerned about animals suffering in the live export trade, and particularly in regards to sheep suffering from extreme heat and long journeys. Particularly distressing was the case of the MV Bahija where thousands of sheep and cattle were sent to a war zone, then sent back to Australia, and spent more than a month stranded off the West Australian Coast before being unloaded and reloaded and sent back to the Middle East via a longer route. 4 Cattle and 64 sheep died before they could all be unloaded at Fremantle Port. The distress and suffering they endure during long sea voyages is heart-wrenching. Vision of sheep crammed into these export ships, in faecal showers and struggling to breath and downed sheep is distressing, disturbing and completely unnecessary.



Footage from *Animals Australia*, captured by a brave crewman on the *Awassi Express* in 2017 showed sheep suffering and dying from heat stroke, literally cooking from the inside out. Evidence documented across five voyages led to a ban on shipping sheep into the northern summer and underpinned the decision by the Albanese government to phase out the live sheep export trade. Anyone who can condone this extreme cruelty and death to sheep or to any sentient being, totally lacks compassion and empathy for other beings.

I would like to ask the committee members, if they could imagine just for one fleeting moment, being the sheep in the above image. Unable to stand and having to lie in your own excrement and that of many other sheep all crowded around you, in stifling heat without proper ventilation or sanitation. Do you honestly think that any being should be subjected to this, under any circumstances, let alone purely for the commercial gain of individual people. There are plenty of ways to earn an income ethically and without harming animals, indeed torturing animals in such

abhorrent ways. It is a horror story that I am sure you would not want to be the victim in.

(o) any other related matters

Live export harms the environment by polluting our oceans with animal waste and also the dead bodies of those that don't survive and are thrown overboard or that drown when ships sink. Live export also contributes to carbon emissions. The unsanitary conditions on board the live export ships also means that people working on the ships are also subjected to working in putrid conditions.

In conclusion

Live export subjects sheep to prolonged stress and suffering, with little to no relief during long sea journeys. Heat stress, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and inadequate care as well as dead and dying sheep and their suffering is well-documented and remains a significant concern. I urge the committee to prioritise the welfare of animals over the profits made from their suffering. The trade of live export of sheep by sea equates to only 0.1% of Australia's total agricultural exports. Supporting humane alternatives aligns better with our values and sheep are spared from unnecessary suffering.

The live sheep export ban is a significant step forward for animal rights and their welfare, setting a global example and encouraging other countries to reconsider and phase out similar practices. Banning live exports can also improve a nation's ethical reputation and surely that is in the best interests of all Australians.

We need to shift from the colonial days and embrace a future of kindness and compassion and also respect for the environment and the future of all species as well. The time to end the cruel live export trade by sea has well and truly come. We have no need to torture animals in the pursuit of dollars. We need to pursue sustainable and ethical business models in NSW and all across Australia.