

Submission
No 48

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

Organisation: Evolve Kindly
Date Received: 20 September 2024

Submission regarding the Inquiry into the Phase Out of Live Sheep Export in NSW

Dear Committee,

My name is Lorna Elisei, and I am making this submission as Executive Director of my company Evolve Kindly. I believe in the welfare, kindness and intrinsic value of all animals, not just humans and feel this is an opportunity to express my views and concerns regarding the impact of the phase out of Australian live sheep exports by sea in New South Wales (as well as all of Australia).

Good animal welfare should include physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing and natural living environments. Live sheep export is an outdated and unnecessary process and well overdue for reform. Further it is ethically, environmentally and economically unsustainable.

I have responded to several terms of reference, as per the below:

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

(i) transport operators

(ii) fodder and grain producers

(iii) other associated industries

The live sheep export has been on the decline for decades and is now mainly concentrated in WA since 2016. In financial year 2022-23, NSW exported 5,899, compared to WA 630,763, and by comparison VIC only exported 941 and SA 1,814. Given these numbers, any impacts for NSW are quite low, with WA being able to provide and process meats to NSW via refrigeration or frozen – not live, if there were issues with *local* demands.

Economically, there's simply no good argument for continuing to allow live sheep export. Research shows that a sheep processed in Australia will contribute a lot more to the Australian economy than live exporting the animal. A phase out of live sheep export will result in better welfare for sheep and more jobs for Australians.

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

The government review and inquiries on banning live export has been ongoing since 1980's, yet it still hasn't been nationally banned – no matter the public outcry after many investigations and expose on the suffering and cruelly exposed. The government and more and more of the public are aware of the inherent issues.

The welfare effects of this insidious live export trade are far and wide, and unyielding. They include food and water deprivation, confinement over long periods of time, poor ventilation systems, distress and disease.

Many sheep suffer in terrible conditions on sea voyages including death from extreme heat stress, being crushed from confinement, mass drowning - as experienced in the incident of New Zealand 2022, or from being stranded and dying of starvation, or dehydration.

All of these impacts, serious breaches and non-compliance of industry regulations cannot go unnoticed and cannot be called ethical or humane in any way. Further, Australia effectively

'washes its hands' and has no accountability for the animal's welfare once the destination has been reached, with any 'protections' under the Australian law vanishing. It has been observed that livestock is often being injured, beaten and using methods that cause pain and suffering.

Does the Australian government accept these cruel and unjust conditions for animals in which they export? With no CCTV or filming on board vessels, nor a mandatory independent observer on board, it is up to whistle-blowers and animal advocacy organisations to unveil the true realities of this sinister industry, that any compassionate human would find confronting and needless.

Many undercover investigations have exposed the realities with images or videos. Such as a brave vet's journey across 57 live export voyages since 2001 (*see references*). Every vet is taught about 'industrial' animal farming and its consequences. Her journey was about trying to do something and making the invisible visible.

Animal Agriculture's live export industry has operated behind a shield of 'influencing better animal welfare standards' globally, for too long, when in reality, it is entrenched with cruel practices that continue to supply animals globally, regardless of how they are treated and are primarily driven by profits.

A brave whistleblower in 2018, provided evidence over 5 voyages of the shocking conditions, which included discarding dead cattle in the ocean along with all the excrement and toxic faeces, and who can say what environmental impacts this has across each voyage.

Another example of cruelty and suffering in regarding the ship MV Bahijah; after being at sea for weeks only to be sent back to Australia, then being stranded off the coast of Fremantle, WA on 29th of January for weeks, with temperatures reaching over 40 degrees. Sadly, 64 sheep perished and then the livestock were rerouted on to Israel – yet another gruelling trip after being confined for so long.

Welfare risks in live sheep export cannot simply be 'regulated out' - they are inherent to the system. If regulations were introduced to truly address these issues and improve animal welfare, the trade would quickly become economically unfeasible. It is simply not possible to have a properly regulated and profitable live sheep export trade, due to the unavoidable conflict between improving sheep welfare and protecting exporter profits. This explains why the full recommended northern summer ban period (6 months) and other recommended reforms were never implemented, as doing so would have rendered the trade unprofitable.

(i) examine proven alternative markets and opportunities for New South Wales sheep producers

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

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

As much as this is a challenging and hard time for farmers, it will be far worse for the whole agricultural sector if nothing is done. Climate impacts will continue to be extreme and there will be no way to adapt to climate resilient farming. The government has to stop thinking in profits and trade agreements and instead consider the animals, the environment and the benefits and opportunities of ceasing such an outdated trade to the farmers themselves.

Many environments are suffering due to drought and climate and isn't sustainable in the long term.

Transitioning and investing in farmers, to find alternative practices is the best position the government can be in, to foster new economic growth in regional centres and encourage younger generations to contribute to farming in an ethical, non-violent and sustainable way.

Educating and transitioning our farmers to alternative plant-based farming operations will ensure the economy doesn't suffer and a new generation of farmers can be employed.

Alternatives to sheep farming (and any livestock and industrial intensive animal farming) include; hemp, cotton, mushroom, legumes, grain, seed oils, oats, soy, wheat, farmers market style garden (produce), food technology and lab grown or cultivated meats.

To assist this transition, a reallocation of subsidies and incentives including public funding away from traditional livestock and towards sustainable and climate friendly farming needs to occur. External support is central to transitioning and backing farmers to a more sustainable model.

Across the globe many countries are ceasing live exports. New Zealand phased out of export by sea in April 2023, UK is also set to also limit the number of livestock exported.

Again, live export has been in decline for the last 20 years, possibly due to climate conditions such as drought and flooding which affects the 'stock' as well as the land itself. There are changing cultural behaviours towards the realities of the livestock industry and how inhumane and unethical it really is. Promoting an increase in meat reduction, vegetarianism and veganism.

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

Following on from the last point above, animal welfare concern is becoming more and more visible to the public as well as the climate impacts and concerns regarding land degradation, land clearing, habitat loss for wildlife and native species, ecosystem and biodiversity loss, water way pollution and insufficient use of grains and soy – i.e. given to livestock instead of citizens who have food insecurity.

Australia's international reputation has suffered severely as a result of live sheep export. It's damaging the perception that people overseas have of Australia as a progressive country that cares about animal welfare and acts ethically and sustainably.

There is overwhelming Australian opposition to the trade however, the message falls on deaf ears of the government which keeps subsidising, profiting and engaging in trade agreements to continue the suffering and senselessness. This is not representative of the voice of the people.

(o) any other related matter

Yes, there is the environmental benefits of moving away from this outdated practice, as well as the opportunity to improve the farmers quality of life and their mental health and wellbeing. Transitioning away from livestock farming would limit the carbon footprint of humanity and reduce the pressure on water, land and biodiversity. It would also improve

human health, as animal farming increases the risks of pandemics and bacterial resistance. Transitioning away from unsustainable practices, doing better for, and by our farmers.

Studies have shown that farmers are motivated to transition by compassion, sensitivity to seeing raised animals suffer, their love for animals, recognition of animal rights, acknowledgement of injustice, to end their financial troubles, by the environment, a move away from fossil fuels for the machinery required and all the toxic input into the land by rearing the animals. Supporting farmers in transitioning away from this type of work into something more beneficial, positive for the land and profitable is something that is well overdue.

Conclusion / Recommendation

I take there to be overwhelming social support for the phase out of live sheep export, in NSW as well as the whole of Australia. This is primarily due to the ongoing and unaddressed, horrific animal welfare issues that have plagued the industry for decades and occurs needlessly. Further, as climate change continues to intensify and change the landscape of farming, farmers need and deserve alternative options to keep this industry thriving and climate resilient. The government needs to provide adequate funding, resources and education in order to make this a reality for many farmers struggling, economically, physically and mentally.

The NSW Government has an opportunity to do the right thing not only for the industry today but for future generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

Lorna Elisei
Executive Director
Evolve Kindly



References

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