

Submission
No 59

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

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To the Inquiry Committee,

As a resident of New South Wales, I am writing to express my support for the phase out of the live sheep trade, an industry that raises serious animal welfare concerns and tarnishes our international reputation. The Australian community overwhelmingly echoes this sentiment, backed by scientific evidence that the trade is wholly unacceptable in modern society. NSW is not economically impacted by the phase out.

The live sheep export trade is fundamentally inhumane and unnecessary. Both historical instances and current scientific data corroborate the trade fails to meet acceptable animal welfare standards. The industry's assertion that death rates have declined should not be deemed a scientifically valid measure of animal welfare. Mortality is an extreme measure that neglects the several, grave animal welfare issues that precede death and provides no insight into the experiences of the surviving animals. In the wake of the MV Awassi Express incident, the 2018 McCarthy Review recommended that the industry cease to rely on mortality rates as a performance indicator. The fact that the industry and its advocates continue to reference mortality rates in defence of the trade underscores their unwillingness to change.

Australian sheep shipped to the Middle East are commonly slaughtered while fully conscious. This contrasts with Halal-accredited slaughter in Australia, which includes stunning prior to the slaughter of lamb and mutton destined for the Middle East. Unconscious slaughter inflicts considerable pain and distress on sheep. Unfortunately, there is little hope that Middle Eastern abattoirs and Halal authorities will revise this practice and accept stunning in the near future.

Our international standing has suffered greatly due to our involvement in live sheep exports. The most effective way for Australia to demonstrate leadership in animal welfare is to transition away from this trade, leveraging our scientific and technical expertise to influence animal welfare standards globally.

The majority of Australians, as evidenced by recent inquiries, support the cessation of live sheep exports. Over 80% of the 800 submissions and 3,300 survey responses received by the 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports advocated for the phase-out. Similarly, more than 85% of the 13,000 submissions to the House Agriculture Committee Inquiry into the Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea Bill 2024 expressed support for the Bill.

The community's concern for animal welfare runs deep. Research indicates that awareness of animal suffering, including in the live export trade, can impact psychological wellbeing. A study by the University of Queensland found that exposure to images of animal suffering in the live export trade led to significant emotional distress and feelings of helplessness. The researchers recommended that future media coverage of animal suffering in the trade should provide contact details for counselling and mental health support.

The NSW sheep industry has minimal exposure to the trade, given the small volumes that constitute less than 3% of annual national turn off and less than 2% of national sheep meat export value. The 2023 report of the Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports did not identify any perceived impact on the NSW industry from the phase-out. Indeed, NSW is scarcely mentioned in the 200-page report. However, the harm to Australia's

international reputation resulting from the cruelty of the live sheep export trade does affect NSW, as it has negative implications for the entire sheep industry.

Regards,

James Cameron