

Submission
No 60

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

In my submission, I support the phase-out of the live sheep export trade.

Initial observations/comments:

- I question the legitimacy of the NSW Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party to challenge the federal government's legislation to end the live sheep export trade in May 2028. We are a federated nation, and federal laws take precedence over state laws, regulations, codes etc.
- I am concerned how a so-named political party, with an obvious right-wing extremist agenda, could embed itself in any civil society today.
- Live animal export is a moral dilemma and is contestable on any scientific, ethical, economic, social, cultural, religious or political grounds. Yet on economic grounds alone, this vile trade has been allowed to flourish.

My submission covers four main points:

1. Animal welfare/animal cruelty legislation in Australia is archaic and does not meet acceptable humane standards. Australian economic history has prospered "on the sheep's back", and the management of animal welfare delegated to state government agricultural ministries, with significant vested interests, conflicts of interest and a lack of transparency.
2. Live-sheep exports are a marginal trade with less than 0.1% of Australia's agricultural exports. The trade is dominated by wealthy corporate conglomerates who have been given ample time (since 2019) and funds to seek alternative markets.
3. The focus in this debate must shift from the purely economic value of animals to a focus on seeking alternative markets, sustainability, kindness, and animal welfare.
4. The Australian Government must take a leadership role in animal welfare and dedicate resources to develop a new national framework, which includes the establishment of an independent statutory body dedicated to animal welfare. Animal welfare in Australia must be embedded as a core goal of public policy.

1. Animal welfare/animal cruelty legislation in Australia is archaic and does not meet modern humane standards.

Australian economic history has prospered “on the sheep’s back”, and the management of animal welfare has been delegated to state government agricultural ministries, with significant vested interests, conflicts of interest and a lack of transparency.

In NSW, animal welfare legislation falls under *The Protection of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*. This grossly inadequate legislation defines animal welfare in term of cruelty - (1) An act of cruelty is an act or omission that results in an animal being—

- (a) unreasonably or unnecessarily harmed,
- (b) unreasonably or unnecessarily killed,
- (c) abused, beaten, infuriated, kicked, maimed, mutilated, terrified, tormented, tortured or wounded,
- (d) overloaded, overworked, overdriven, overridden or overused, or (e) unreasonably or unnecessarily exposed to excessive heat or excessive cold.

However, this is precisely what happens to animals in the live-export industry!

Australian live-export standards, as set out in the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL)* fail to meet the basic requirements of animal welfare or prevent exported livestock from suffering and dying on these voyages.

Because of the deficiency of Australian legislation and regulatory controls, just for example I will refer to somewhat improved principles as agreed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in the United Kingdom. (FAWC, 1979):

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst.
2. Freedom from discomfort.
3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease.
4. Freedom to express normal behaviours.
5. Freedom from fear and distress.

Live export breaches every animal welfare principle in any country where any animal cruelty laws exist.

2. Sheep exports are a marginal trade with less than 0.1% of Australia’s agricultural exports.

The sheep export trade is exclusively dominated by the big end of town, by people who have political influence, friends in high places and wallets thick enough to garner support for any issue. Small farmers do not. Think back only a few years when farmers were pleading for help to feed and keep their stock alive during droughts, floods, and fires. Families were severely traumatised, children distressed, and many farmers contemplated suicide; and some did. Most farming families care about their animals; this is their livelihood, although they need help to improve animal welfare requirements.

These farming families are not the live-sheep exporters! It’s the business of wealthy, big corporate farmers with lower levels of empathy who are behind this greedy trade. They are part of the global economy with interests based on wealth creation, not animal welfare, and they are the loud ones in the room that politicians listen to.

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Only the super-rich could be involved in an industry with massive overhead costs. The cost of building running and maintaining purpose-built vessels for the humane treatment of animals must be astronomical. Who but the wealthiest corporate operators could maintain a fleet of this nature.

These people have been offered a very generous \$107 million transition package and a four-year phase out – for something they knew would happen since 2019. Why can't this money be given to struggling small businesses, small farmers, restaurateurs, pensioners and others who have all had to make multiple life changes in their lives without certainty or help from anyone.

3. The focus in this debate must shift from the purely economic value of animals to a focus on seeking alternative markets, sustainability, kindness, and animal welfare.

New best practice facilities can be set up in Australia that protect Australian jobs and guarantee stringent new animal welfare standards. This is how Australia can become a world model for animal welfare; not one based on dumping terrified sentient animals on inhumane, ferocious cultures in foreign lands. Sheep are currently exported to nations that do not respect human life or human rights, so it is unconscionable for Australia to send animals offshore knowing full well what will happen.

Thoughts of animals suffering affect my mental health. Many people share my distress about the brutality of this trade – long journeys in confined spaces, the heat, cold, dehydration and illness, their horrific slaughter; not to mention the nine shipping disasters that have occurred in my lifetime. Our mental health is never a consideration in this debate, but it does exist. I don't want to be a member of a nation that has so little respect for animal life.

4. The Australian Government must take a leadership role in animal welfare and dedicate resources to develop a new national framework, which includes the establishment of an independent statutory body dedicated to animal welfare. Animal welfare in Australia must be embedded as a core goal of public policy.

Federation gave the Australian government authority over national interests - trade, exports, economic growth and foreign affairs (i.e. the nation's international standing), but it does not have a national agenda for animal welfare. In 2018, a review by Phillip Moss AM found that the Department of Agriculture struggled to balance its competing roles of promoting the live export trade and protecting animal welfare. (RSPCA website).

Australian export laws MUST reflect the values of the Australian people, and we have demonstrated that we want an end to this barbaric trade. I am a member of several animal welfare organisations and have donated to animal welfare charities for many years (check out my tax return!!). The burgeoning number of animal welfare interest groups, pet-reunited and animal activists demonstrates the groundswell of support for significant change in animal welfare management. The Shooters, Fishers & Farmers Party is an antiquated group of wealthy men who venerate their barbaric past and cannot read the mood of the people or see the need for a more sustainable future based on international animal welfare standards. According to the Australian Alliance for Animals, a new animal welfare commission would:

- Greater national consistency reducing compliance costs for business
- A more streamlined approach to animal welfare policy and standards development

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- Greater cooperation on animal welfare policy development between stakeholders and jurisdictions
- Improved consumer and community confidence in animal welfare standards and regulatory oversight
- Stronger international reputation on animal welfare and improved market access.