

**Submission
No 63**

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

Name: Ms Deanne Vines
Date Received: 20 September 2024

NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

19 September 2024

Impact of the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea on New South Wales

Dear Panel Members,

I am writing to express my support for the ban on live sheep exports, in response to the inquiry into the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea.

The live sheep export trade is fundamentally misaligned with acceptable animal welfare standards. Recent regulatory reforms have failed to address the inherent welfare issues deep-seated within the industry.

It is important to recognise that the NSW sheep industry's exposure to the trade is minimal, with small volumes making up less than 2% of the national sheep meat export value. The 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports found no evidence to suggest that the NSW sheep industry will experience any significant impacts due to the phase-out. The panel concluded that following a phase out, it was unlikely that there be any increase in interstate trade between WA and NSW due to the large freight costs.

The live sheep export industry often argues that mortality rates have fallen, however, this fails to provide a comprehensive measure of animal welfare. Mortality is a measure which neglects the numerous, significant animal welfare issues preceding death and gives no insight into the experiences of the surviving animals. It is worth noting the 2018 McCarthy Review's key recommendation, in the wake of the MV Awassi Express incident, was for the industry to stop relying on mortality rates as a performance measure. The industry's continued reference to and reliance on mortality rates illustrates a lack of meaningful change.

The suffering continues and Regulations are failing. According to an analysis of Independent Observer reports from 2018 to 2023 there has been starvation and gastrointestinal disease on board the live export ships. Around 70 per cent of reports noted animal welfare issues onboard including poor loading, poor handling, poor management of sick sheep, long horns, lambing on board and sheep not fit to load for transport.

Upon reaching the Middle East, Australian sheep are often slaughtered without prior stunning, causing severe pain, fear and distress. In contrast, in Australia, sheep are stunned before slaughter, sparing them the conscious experience of the neck cut and bleed out process. Crucially, this includes Halal accredited slaughter for the meat export trade to the Middle East.

Australia's contribution to global animal welfare standards does not necessitate participation in live sheep exports. By utilising international platforms such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and international trade agreement negotiations, we can encourage nations to elevate their animal welfare standards and achieve widespread, long-term benefits.

It's worth noting that a national poll conducted by McCrindle Research in 2022 found that 78% of Australians are in support of phasing out the trade. This sentiment is echoed in Western Australia, where the trade predominantly takes place, with a May 2023 poll revealing that 71% of Western Australians, including 69% in rural and regional areas, back the phase-out.

Indeed, community concern for animal welfare is so profound that research has shown that awareness of animal suffering, including in the live export trade, can impact people's psychological wellbeing. A study by the University of Queensland found that exposure to images of animal suffering caused significant emotional distress and feelings of helplessness.

The live sheep export industry had over three decades to improve animal welfare standards. However, it has only displayed interest in doing so when independent organisations have exposed the harsh reality of the trade. There is convincing evidence that the industry cannot continue without compromising animal welfare.

Thank you for your time and I urge you to support a long overdue ban of live sheep export by sea.

Yours sincerely

Deanne Vines