

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 19 September 2024

Partially
Confidential

Dear NSW Parliament,

My name is _____, a passionate advocate for animal welfare who strongly believes in the inherent dignity and sensitivity of all creatures, including the humble sheep which form a key part of our agricultural industry. I am writing to share my views on the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea, a topic that deeply concerns me.

The live sheep export trade, in my view, is fundamentally cruel and unnecessary. Historical precedent and current scientific research indicate that the trade cannot meet acceptable animal welfare standards. Despite recent regulatory reforms, inherent animal welfare issues persist, illustrating the deep-seated nature of these problems within the trade.

The strain on the sheep during transport is immense. Australian Merino sheep, not accustomed to high humidity, suffer prolonged heat stress during at least 60% of the voyages as they traverse the equatorial region and enter the Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions. These sheep are transported to some of the world's most sweltering locations, a situation likely to worsen with climate change. The sheep endure hot, humid conditions for weeks on sea voyages to the Middle East, where they are forced to reside in their own faeces. They are exposed to multiple stressors such as failure to eat, lameness, infection, and respiratory diseases due to high ammonia levels on board.

The live sheep export industry often cites falling death rates as a sign of improved animal welfare. However, mortality is a blunt measure that overlooks the multiple serious welfare issues that precede death and tells us nothing about the experience of the animals that survive. The industry's continued reliance on mortality rates as a measure of performance underscores its resistance to change.

Upon arrival in the Middle East, Australian sheep are slaughtered without stunning, causing extreme pain and distress due to the manual restraint, cutting of tissue, and experience of exsanguination. In stark contrast, in Australia, sheep are stunned before slaughter, including for Halal-accredited slaughter for the meat export trade to the Middle East, sparing them from the conscious experience of the neck cut and bleed out process.

We can promote improved animal welfare standards globally without participating in live sheep exports. Through international bodies such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and international trade agreement negotiations, we can encourage nations to lift standards. Supporting civil society groups such as RSPCA International, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Compassion in World Farming, and Humane Society International can also contribute to improving global animal welfare standards.

Public sentiment is overwhelmingly in favour of phasing out the trade. National polling conducted by McCrindle Research in 2022 found that 78% of Australians supported a phase out of the trade. More recent polling in May 2023 found that 71% of Western Australians supported the phase out, including 69% in rural and regional areas of the state. Research has shown that knowledge and awareness of animal suffering, including in the live export trade, can affect the psychological wellbeing of people.

The NSW sheep industry has not been reliant on the live export trade for many years. No NSW sheep have been sourced for live export since at least 2018 when exports from Port Adelaide ceased. The 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports found no evidence to suggest the NSW sheep industry will incur any notable impacts due to the phase out.

In conclusion, I believe the best way for Australia to demonstrate leadership in animal welfare is by transitioning away from the live sheep export trade. Our scientific and technical expertise can be used to influence animal welfare standards internationally, thereby promoting a more humane and ethical approach to livestock management.

Regards,