

**Submission
No 67**

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

Name: Ms Lucia Smith
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The Ban of Live Sheep Export MUST remain

Dear Committee

The phase-out of live sheep export delivers on a Labor government commitment supported by the majority of Australians. The Bill "The Export Control Amendment (Ending Live sheep Exports by Sea) Act 2024" passed both the lower and upper house in July. It was voted on by all members of Parliament and the Senate. The vote was to end this cruel trade. This is democracy in action and MUST not be overturned by a minority party requesting yet another inquiry that followed a federal inquiry.

How many inquiries are we to keep having after a Bill that has already been legislated and represents the majority of Australians who support the Bill and want an end to this despicable trade.

Australian export laws should reflect the values of the Australian community. Over 78% of Australians support an end to the export of live sheep to the Middle East.

The generous financial assistance package being provided to farmers affected by the phase-out is supported by taxpayers who want their farmers to transition to a frozen chilled meat trade that is an increasing industry. We should not keep at taxpayer expense a declining industry such as live sheep export propped up by taxpayer financial support.

This policy to end the trade is based on decades of evidence and 'science' that live sheep export is inherently cruel.

Contrary to industry claims, the trade has not been "fixed." Independent Observer data confirms sheep continue to suffer prolonged heat stress on voyages to the Middle East.

Sheep suffer at every stage of the journey, at sea and in importing countries where they face fully conscious slaughter.

The live trade does not accord with community expectations for how animals should be treated today. The community have a very different understanding of animal sentience to that of the industry because the industry is only and will only be driven by profits and greed based on animal cruelty.

The industry needs to move with the times to create a more humane and sustainable future that respects animal welfare and protects Australia's international reputation.

FOR SHEEP TO BE KILLED HUMANELY IN AUSTRALIA UNDER AUSTRALIAN WELFARE STANDARDS AND TRANSPORTED AS FROZEN MEAT IS THE **ONLY** WAY THIS INDUSTRY CAN NOW PROCEED.

Following are the reasons why live sheep exports must be banned despite a previous Liberal/National government claiming falsely that it was regulated. The public have followed this industry for years now, and we are utterly astounded as to the excuses made by past governments to justify this trade continuing. The wastage of taxpayer money on reviews with very few recommendations even adopted in full and the ones that were implemented were tokenistic, still saw sheep suffer unbearable heat stress and suffering on the journey and in the imported countries. Red tape bureaucracy within departments and failures to withdraw and suspend licences, investigations taking months and months and export ships still being allowed to take sheep on these 'ships of death' continued with broken promises to end the cruelty. No compassion whatsoever shown towards the suffering of animals and whistle blowers threatened and in fear of disclosing the real truth behind this industry. This is what the community saw, and we are ashamed that previous governments did not even recognise this cruelty but wanted the industry to continue to operate under a veil of secrecy. We thank the whistleblowers for having the courage to speak up for voiceless suffering sheep. The truth exposed the following-

1. Animals spending days or weeks (sometimes months when unloading is refused) in these poor, cruel standards on export ships.
2. Sanitary and welfare conditions are terrible- basically, there are virtually no sanitary or welfare precautions. Crowded animals, rocking movement of ships/sea sickness, extreme weather conditions, excrement, faeces and ammonia fumes make it hard for the sheep to breathe. Food ends up dirty, water is scarce if available and heat stress affects sheep.
3. Many animals die on the way, others are born- Many animals suffer from injuries and diseases and die before arriving at the destination, without receiving proper veterinary care. Most are left in their pens to rot or be thrown into the sea. Unfortunately, since there's no control about the animal's pregnancies, investigations have even shown animals being born in these awful conditions and young lambs dying after they are born.
4. The live sheep export trade is dangerous- One case of a cargo ship that capsized with 14,000 live sheep off the coast of Romania drowned. In Brazil, a vessel carrying 5,000 cows sank close to the Port of Barbacena and all animals again drowned.
5. Importing countries cannot assure the Australian government what techniques or how our animals will be slaughtered- Importing countries want to import live animals because they want to control how these animals will be killed, to make sure the slaughter will follow some religious precepts. Therefore, it is not possible to assure how our exported animals will be slaughtered, and whether it will be compliant to even the most basic animal welfare standards, such as stunning the animals before cutting their throats.
6. Huge environmental impacts- The faeces, excrement, manure by-products from animals produced on live export ships is dumped directly into the sea. Waste accumulated by the cleaning process has its contents discarded directly into our oceans and seas which pollutes these environments even more. This causes water and air pollution.
7. Sheep suffer throughout the whole live export journey, which can take months, and welfare issues are cumulative and inherent across the supply chain. They're at risk of suffering extreme heat stress, poor conditions and overcrowded stocking densities that increase discomfort, and can limit access to food and water for some animals whilst transported. They're at risk because of the unavoidable reality that live export leads to weeks of stressful circumstances for the sheep including repeated handling by unfamiliar people, standing in their own faeces and urine, unfamiliar environments with loud noises, varied ventilation, high humidity, mistreatment and inhumane slaughter practices once they disembark at their destination.

I remind the industry, regulator and farmers that this is **the right thing to do, as a people and country**. We can no longer justify this cruelty continuing because of the false economics it produces. When we look at what the taxpayer contributes to keep live sheep exports continuing this is NOT financially viable for our country. Animals have consistently been shown to be taken out of the Australian approved supply chain (ESCAS) which means that they end up being slaughtered outside of the supply chain in ways we cannot control. Undercover investigations have shown that this happens consistently. ESCAS has failed and will continue to fail as monitoring in overseas imported countries by Australian officials is limited and costs too much. Stunning in these countries rarely occurs and is therefore still a continuing substantial animal welfare issue.

There are alternatives that will yield a robust economic industry without the cruelty attached something I wholeheartedly support. There is more money in the export of chilled sheep meat than in the export of live sheep which is currently a \$92 million industry. There are opportunities now to expand domestic processing and give more regional jobs to Australians to process meat in Australia so as to increase sheep meat exports in a chilled market. Australia exported a record \$4.5 billion of sheep meat in 2021–22. The frozen sheep meat trade has established markets in the United States, Australia's largest sheep meat market by value whilst China is Australia's largest sheep meat market by volume. There are expanding markets for frozen sheep meat with recent trade agreements with the UK and India.

RSPCA Australia's senior policy officer said domestic processing is the only way to ensure Australian animals' welfare. "Investment in a chilled and frozen meat-only trade would prevent the suffering inherent to live export and save millions of animals from the cruel fate awaiting them at their destination and on-board ships," he said. Despite minor improvements to animal welfare standards over the years, graphic images of welfare breaches, continued suffering of sheep on these ships and poor animal welfare standards in imported countries and at point of slaughter has meant that most Australians are strongly against the trade continuing.

The LIVE SHEEP EXPORT TRADE MUST END, and I welcome that it has finally been legislated at a federal level to end by May 1st, 2028. **The phase out must be as short and end as soon as possible by this date.**

Your sincerely

Lucia Smith