

Submission
No 72

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

Name: Ms Janice Haviland

Date Received: 19 September 2024

Protect the Ban to end live sheep exports

I strongly support the government's Bill to phase out the live sheep export trade which must remain in place with the legislated final end date of the 1st May 2028 to remain.

Some key terms of reference relates to

1. *Animal welfare concerns relevant to the determination to cease live sheep export by sea by the Federal Government.*

-This has been a reckless corrupt industry that has been allowed to operate in silence with extreme levels of animal cruelty unbeknown to the community as to what was actually happening to gentle sheep. They were claiming animals were treated humanely a myth to silence the public. The industry continued this cruelty until images were shown on TV and the internet as to how our exported animals were being treated. Finally digital media had arrived for everyone to access and now the industry were being made accountable as well as the government for permitting such brutality.

-As the regulator the Australian government has tolerated cruelty to animals allowing an industry to compromise on animal welfare. Undercover investigations have consistently exposed the cruelty occurring across the live export trade, yet past Australian Governments continue to knowingly send our animals abroad to suffer in these conditions.

-A mortality rate of up to 2% of sheep is acceptable to the Australian Government before an investigation will be conducted. This means that on a ship carrying 67,000 live sheep, 1339 sheep deaths would be tolerated, and an investigation would not be triggered until 1340 sheep have died onboard. Considering the millions of sheep shipped each year, this equates to a very high number of mortalities on these 'death ships'.

-The industry has fought back because it felt it could continue the same status quo of abuse and cruelty towards all Australian exported animals. The community's knowledge of animal sentience has grown where people now understand that animals feel what we feel- joy, suffering, pain, neglect and abuse. Australians are demanding humane treatment of animals. The community's awareness of this disgusting under- regulated industry has been strong. We will not allow any industry to treat any animal including farmed and exported animals in such a cruel manner.

-After arriving in the destination country, exported animals endure more road transport, different (sometimes extreme) climatic conditions, crowded feedlots and often rough handling before finally being slaughtered. The industry has now been made accountable for the way that they operate whilst transporting sheep and a failed supply chain that increases the suffering of sheep who can be sold and bought outside approved supply chains, transported in extreme hot temperature 45 degrees plus in the Middle East in car boots and on roof racks. This is wrong and proves that this industry is incapable of continuing. Maintaining even the poorest of animal welfare standards across borders is impossible to maintain. The community will NOT accept this treatment, and we will continue our fight until the export of live sheep by sea ends for good.

-Governments insist that its policies and decisions on live export are science and evidence- based. Scientific evidence shows it is impossible to reduce the heat stress sheep will suffer if they are shipped from Australia into a Northern Hemisphere summer between May and October. If decisions were guided by science as the regulator has claimed, sheep would not be permitted to be shipped from Australia into the Northern Hemisphere during that region's summer, yet they still are transported during May and then transported again from mid -September.

-An increasing volume of scientific evidence shows animals **cannot** be exported live without suffering. Those regulating the trade have admitted it can't be regulated to achieve good animal welfare, without compromising government policy to maintain the trade.

-Animal welfare concerns have been ongoing because of the industry's reluctance and arrogance to genuinely improve and raise the standards of animal welfare. Why? Because the industry's sole purpose is to turn a monetary profit. Money is made of the cruel suffering of gentle sheep. The more that they can cram into pens on board these 'ships of death' the more money they generate. Couple with reduced staff and any Vet on board if at all to tend to sheep that are sick, the situation worsens. Long journeys expose animals to extreme heat, dehydration, injury and illness.

-Ships are not cleaned during voyages, creating unsanitary and harmful conditions and sheep endure severe suffering during long, stressful sea voyages. Ship accidents at sea can result in the drowning of animals and loss of human life.

-Sheep suffer from heat stress, leading to severe health issues or death. The McCarthy Review represented a significant shift in the regulation of live sheep exports. The two most significant immediate recommendations related to stocking density and a revised heat stress assessment model. However, these recommendations were opposed by the industry initially and were never implemented in their entirety. Stocking densities mean that sheep are crammed in tight some being unable to access water or feed pellets (an unnatural food for sheep anyway). Some animals will not adjust to the pellet food on the ship and will starve or experience serious weight loss. Water also does not remain clean and with reduced staff, sheep are always drinking filthy water. Ships are made of steel that absorb even more heat and with limited inadequate ventilation and the ammonia build-up of faeces that is not removed by staff, the surrounding air affects the animal's breathing. With all these issues it is understandable that many sheep die on these voyages mainly through disease, illness, injury, starvation, infection, and heat stress. Sheep cannot regulate their body temperatures efficiently. This is the physiology of sheep, and it will never change. Therefore, McCarthy recommended no sheep transports from May to October that represented the Northern Middle Eastern summer.

The government pressured by the industry did not accept these recommendations. The Final Report of the McCarthy Review was provided to the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources on 11 May 2018. The Liberal Coalition government made it clear that its policy was to continue the live sheep trade to the Middle East, including during the northern summer, and only supported the development of some disappointing measures to manage heat stress for sheep in this trade. A pitiful response. Sheep continued to suffer heat stress and finally after many years the industry only agreed to a short ban (1st June to 14th September not 1st May to 31st October as recommended by the 'science') on sheep exports. However, this also showed that a ban was meaningless as it could be overturned by the agriculture minister which occurred when Minister Littleproud buckling under pressure from live export lobbyists still overturned a live sheep export ban approving sheep to be shipped in the middle of the Middle East summer causing high levels of heat stress. The Coalition government failed to keep its word even with the ban. Oman and other destinations had varying ban periods that never covered the full summer in the Middle East. Suffice to say the improvements were minimal, the industry refused to recognise that animal welfare standards needed to improve. Numerous breaches followed, more animal cruelty issues surfaced about the treatment of animals in these imported countries, especially how they were treated, kept, transported and cruelly killed fully conscious without stunning. Animals are often subjected to extreme conditions and cruel practices in foreign countries including rough handling. It is extremely difficult to influence animal welfare laws in other countries or regulate the treatment of Australian animals once they leave our shores.

-The exemption granted in 2020 to live exporter RETWA (a wholly owned subsidiary of repeat offender Kuwait Livestock Transport and Trading) further undermined public confidence in the federal government as the industry's regulator. The government failed time and time again to regulate this industry properly. Companies such as this were given a simple 'slap on the wrist' and then continued their abuse and mistreatment of sheep with the attitude as 'business as usual' with protection by a Coalition government.

-This record with cumulative breaches and continued suffering proved that the industry refused to change and was unfixable. It had lost its social license to operate and had to be legislated at a federal level to shut down. WA is the biggest exporter of sheep in the industry. Interestingly 70% of Western Australians are in favour of a ban where most sheep are exported from to overseas countries.

2. Identify case studies of graziers in other regions or countries that have successfully transitioned from live exports

-The New Zealand Government, which banned the export of live animals for slaughter in 2007, announced in April 2021 that – from 2023 – the export of all live animals (including dairy cattle and livestock used for breeding) will end. New Zealand imposed a total ban on all live animal exports, which came into full effect in April last year. By banning live export, New Zealand has set an example to the rest of the world by declaring that they will not tolerate such systemic cruelty. It's to Australia's shame that our government and the live export industry is still permitting thousands of animals to undergo these horrendous journeys.

-In December, the United Kingdom also put forward legislation to ban live exports for slaughter and fattening. The issue continues to gain momentum across the entire European Union. The European Union has commenced a major review of live animal transport regulations, which is expected to lead to significant reforms to live export laws within its 27 member nations.

-Luxembourg banned the export of live animals to slaughterhouses in third world countries this year.

-The Brazilian court in 2023 banned the export of all live animals in all ports of the country, a significant milestone for animal welfare. Federal judge Djalma Gomes handed down the verdict stating in the ruling that "animals are not things. They are sentient living beings, that is, individuals who feel hunger, thirst, pain, cold, anguish, fear." The Australian live animal export industry refuses to accept this fact.

3. Proven alternative markets and opportunities for New South Wales sheep producers

-To address animal welfare concerns while transitioning from live exports, we should consider advancing the production of lab-grown meat and other animal products. This method not only circumvents the ethical issues associated with live animal transport but also offers a way to meet demand sustainably. Plant-based agriculture and lab-grown meat is a promising market. These methods could offer a more ethical solution to live exports.

-It is a myth that live animal exports supports the Australian economy. Taxpayers are supporting the industry which is conveniently forgotten. In fact, live animal exports has damaged the meat processing sector in Australia as thousands of abattoir-related jobs have been lost, some abattoirs closed, and many are operating below capacity. These can be reopened, with more jobs provided for Australians with a frozen meat trade instead. Australian jobs are lost when live animals are shipped overseas to support jobs and economies in other countries. Meat processing plants have

the ability to increase employment, strengthen our meat processing industry and boost economies in regional Australia.

-It is a myth that live export countries will not accept boxed chilled meat. Countries that import live animals from Australia now also import our boxed meat. Over the last decade there has been a substantial increase in the export of boxed meat from Australia to the Middle East. In 2009, Australia exported 19.9 million kg of boxed lamb to the Middle East. In 2019, this figure increased to 57.0 million kg, an increase of 187%. Middle Eastern demand for chilled and frozen beef, veal, lamb and mutton is growing rapidly. Additionally, an ABARES Report, *Live Export Trade Assessment*, states that the Middle East, Egypt and parts of South-East Asia will accept boxed meat if there is no other alternative.

-Another myth that has been circulating by the industry is that there is a lack of refrigeration in importing countries to support a frozen meat trade. Home appliances have become an integral part of the modern lifestyle in the Middle East and African countries. 2011 Research found that almost all UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain households had fridges and almost three quarters had freezers. Several developing countries in the Asia/Pacific region also rank amongst the fastest-growing markets for refrigeration equipment.

Globally, the highest market for refrigeration is China, followed by India, with Indonesia coming in fifth place. These countries will continue to represent major growth markets for chilled and frozen meat exports.

-According to economic research by ACIL Tasman, the economic benefits of processing sheep in Australia far outweigh the benefits of supplying live sheep. Domestically processed sheep are worth 20 percent more to the Australian economy than sheep exported live, due to the value that will be added to the Australian meat processing sector. Export of live animals is worth less, yet the industry feels that Australian taxpayers must continue supporting the industry that they want which is wrong.

-Confirmed through a succession of economic reports is that most farmers do not rely on live export and with government support can transition into more reliable (and less cruel) farming option when the live export trade ceases.

-The industry says as a justification to keep live export going, that if live sheep export ends animal welfare will be compromised as animals will be sourced from other countries that have lower animal welfare standards than Australia. This is a ridiculous argument. In every country, there are people fighting for the welfare of animals. People in 176 countries are currently fighting to ban live export. People will continue to fight these cruel and abhorrent conditions and push for better welfare for their country's farmed animals. The industry must accept that there are better ways of doing business than subjecting gentle sheep and indeed all animals to be part of such a cruel poorly regulated industry. This is a worldwide issue gaining momentum with many countries wanting an end to the export of live animals. Australia is not unique.

- Many of those in the industry declare that the Middle East consumer prefer to slaughter animals themselves due to religious customs. This mentality is also changing. South Australia currently ships large volumes of Halal accredited boxed meat to countries where we export live animals. This occurs because some Australian abattoirs have the capacity to slaughter animals by the methods required for Halal certification, in compliance with Islamic Law. Furthermore, a requirement for Halal accredited meat is that the animal does not suffer. This means the animal must not be

subject to any cruelty, stress or discomfort before slaughter. If the animal has suffered in these ways, the animal's meat then is unlawful and forbidden to be consumed.

This Halal requirement is inconsistent with the reality of the live export trade, with hundreds of thousands of animals suffering inhumane conditions and handling once onboard ships and during the long, live export process. There is a market to expand Australian abattoirs with the Halal certification. South Australia has taken advantage of this part of the industry. The Pegasus report found that economically it is better for South Australia to value add and export sheep meat chilled. The report found that SA abattoirs were operating under capacity and could have processed all the sheep we had exported live plus many more, and this is precisely what happened from mid-2018 onwards.

4. Conclusion

Australian animals have been exported live for more than 6 decades, but despite ongoing government reviews at taxpayer expense, regulatory breaches causing serious animal suffering continues to occur.

A business reliant on animal suffering is unsustainable and Australian polls show consistent community opposition to this trade. There is no evidence that the Australian live sheep export has a future. Our animals deserve far better than the current standards of live export delivery.

The industry continues to promise change, improved animal welfare standards and humane outcomes for animals, but live export remains unethical and has never ever been able to deliver on their promises. It will never be able to control all aspects of the trade or guarantee that live exported animals won't suffer terrible outcomes.

With government support available for Australian farmers to exit live sheep export, there is now the capacity to transition away from this terribly cruel trade. Economic profits must never be placed above the welfare of animals. Live export will always remain inhumane and that is the reality for these animals, which is unacceptable to the majority of Australians.

I am deeply offended that after decades of suffering this industry with the support of minor parties in NSW still refuses to accept a bill that has been legislated at a federal level. 70% of Australians want this industry to end. Australians have a right to demand this especially when their taxes are propping up a declining industry and when they also oppose animal suffering and cruelty. More money can be made in the frozen chilled sheep export market which is an increasing industry where sheep are processed in Australia under our slaughter standards. Banning live exports can improve our nation's ethical and international reputation. Transition and change is always difficult. But this should not be used as an excuse by the industry to continue live sheep exports. Taxpayer financial support is available to farmers with a timeframe of 4 years to transition to already established chilled sheep markets. There is no excuse this industry can make that will ever support the idea to continue the abuse of exported live sheep. The community will continue to be a voice for animals and advocate for change by governments and make this industry accountable for their cruelty. Live sheep export by sea MUST end by May 2028.

Yours sincerely

Janice Haviland