

**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

## **Submission to the Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW into the phaseout of Australian live sheep exports by sea**

I provide my submission on behalf of myself and my family as we look to the Regional NSW Inquiry into the impact of the phaseout of the Australian live sheep exports by sea. It is respectfully requested that while there are many competing practicalities, adequate information was given to sheep farmers and other related sectors involved that this phase-out was to be imminent for 2028. The Agri-sector is important to all Australians and the push to identify increased productive land-use is understood. It defies logic that the transport of sheep from WA to restock NSW livestock production is a sustainable future practice. Continued improvements in livestock production already exist to increase the multiple birth rate of lambs.

### **Terms of Reference**

- (a) Sheep producers and related supply chains in regional towns are not likely to be equally impacted due to significant changes in farming marginal lands, affected by weather and natural disaster events as natural attrition in communities occurs regardless. Transport operators and feed producers (for the sheep trade) must target their market expansion into other states including WA and not singularly focus on sheep production. Associated industries are also already impacted by staff shortages that are not the result of the live sheep phaseout.

Evidence available includes investigative reports by credible authorities that strongly suggest there is little economic value in subsidising this sheep export (livestock) industry. These reports include those by ABARE, the RSPCA, Animals Australia / The Pegasus Report.

i. [Sheep meat - DAFF \(agriculture.gov.au\)](https://agriculture.gov.au)

ii. [RSPCA Animal Welfare update, Live Exports Science Update Issue 76](#)

iii. [Godde CM, Mason-D’Croze D, Mayberry DE et al \(2020\) Impacts of climate change on the livestock supply chain; a review of the evidence. Global Food Security 28, 100488](#)

iv. [Live Export | Animals Australia https://animalsaustralia.org/our-work/live-export](https://animalsaustralia.org/our-work/live-export)

v. [Shutting down sheep trade would have little economic impact on farmers \(afr.com\)](#)

- (b) Sheep producers have alternative scientific advances in increasing their animal production rates. To consider that animals are being transported such amazingly long distances from WA to NSW, does not reconcile with animal meat quality. WA sheep producers have been given adequate notice that the phaseout was to be implemented. Large tracts of northern pastoral lands are totally unsuitable to sheep farming (reported animal losses in recent years have been horrendous). Other Australian states surely must have capacity to meet shortfalls in NSW livestock numbers.

- (c) Price implications will be that sale prices will likely increase, but the categories of lesser quality meats such as mutton for processing (e.g. the pet industry) will not automatically alter. The irony is that there is an increasing market for high quality restaurant meat with more breeders and producers aiming to value-add to their production. There is a question of quality versus quantity, and Australia has a reputation to uphold for best quality products, sustainable farming and animal welfare practices in production.
- (d) The NSW livestock trade must look to future opportunities to move away from livestock production subsidies. A shift from meat production to alternative food production is able to change their revenue with the need for long term planning for plant-based meat / other products that are gaining consumer approval.
- (e) NSW mutton demand if labelled as a lesser quality product, must be seen in the context of other livestock and wild / game meat that supplies a constantly increasing market. Livestock farmers are already diversifying.
- (f) Compensation to NSW sheep producers by the Federal Government is a short-term option. The substantial Australian taxpayers' subsidies that already prop up this industry can more purposefully be redirected to best practice in transitioning from live sheep exports to developing alternative options into non-meat products as well as improved meat processing. Importantly, environmental factors that contribute to carbon emissions must be included in these cost analyses and benefits.
- (g) As there are strict guidelines for the transport of livestock animal welfare for the state of NSW then these are as valid for consistent animal welfare standards across the border within Australia and overseas. We owe it to ourselves and to our future generations to recognise the abysmal failure of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System ('ESCAS'). It is an affront to our ethics and values, that we surrender control over practices that are illegal in Australia to the sheeps end-fate in abattoirs where their slaughter is not regulated to Australian standards. There is overwhelming evidence of the dreadful conditions (including overcrowding, extreme heat, unclean and cruelty) that our sheep endure en-route to overseas destinations. We are judged by other countries who have abandoned their live sheep trade. It is commonplace to see sheep on livestock trucks subjected to inhumane sun exposure at 40 degrees plus crammed in like sardines, and there are overwhelming numbers of images of misadventure with livestock accidents that is available to members of the public.
- (h) In regard to local meat processors there are many slaughterhouses that avoid scrutiny in their practices of animal welfare. It is not clear why these are allowed to continue. Even if currently, there are insufficient numbers of abattoirs, then why do we need more abattoirs in the pipeline if there will be fewer WA sheep. The Hon Mark Banasiak MLC (NSFF) will attest to unregulated slaughtering of wildlife that occurs outside of regulated abattoirs that could also be used for butchering of carcasses.
- (i) New Zealand famous for its sheep, has proven that its move to end live exports by sea by investing in local processing and alternatives, with positive results from within the industry and animal welfare standard groups. Other countries including Germany, The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Romania have also enacted a ban with more civilised countries recognising the benefits to investigate such alternatives.

- (j) I refer to the trend that farming conditions in NSW are affected by many unpredictable natural events and that outbound migration is a constant reality. Those farmers and rural communities concerned about their future livelihoods expect inducements to help them adapt to new opportunities in an evolving agricultural landscape. The bigger and more prominent NSW farming regions have major agricultural industrialists but are not automatically increasing their workforce. Investment in infrastructure is in partnership with the NSW government yet it is a moral outrage that essential services and businesses are regularly withdrawn from the communities who live there (e.g. banking, hospital specialists, schools, shops, petrol stations, pubs, air services) and should be reversed. This is not automatically correlated to the size of communities and absolutely should not be a deciding factor in supporting rural communities.
- (k) Economic losses are occurring both within NSW and Australia-wide on a daily basis, not exclusively limited to the live sheep industry (and other livestock) related industries. Cost of living barriers and an ageing population influence the economic factors across the state. The mobile travelling population and required investment in essential expensive computerised technology is eroding economic growth by making human employment redundant. Agricultural research and veterinary practices are equipped to adapt to changing rural factors but again involves expensive technology.
- (l) The timeline to identify individual case studies to successful transitions for sheep grazing is too restrictive for this submission. Generally speaking, regenerative farming in NSW for one thing, appears to be positively discriminated against by outdated regulations and attitudes, despite many applicants wanting to practice this as I witnessed last year at a meeting convened by Rachel Ward. It is unrealistic to expect that statistically we record everyone who does not want to conform to traditional livestock production. It also applies to the difficulties accessing the latest statistics from the authoritative reports on those transitioning into changed farming methods or produce.
- (m) Alternative income streams for NSW sheep producers can include expanding the chilled and frozen export markets for example. Australia is a smart country and prides itself on innovation, it requires a shift in developing and funding agribusiness away from livestock production. With water shortages in many parts of NSW (and other states) that is a major consideration in land use planning. Universal acceptance of a vegetarian diet and plant-based meat production is a frontier with limitless application in many regional areas. Feeding the world is necessary and a humanitarian requirement, however, the humane treatment of animals reflects on our moral compass as well. My community encourages better education towards dismantling resistance to plant-based foods as it has enormous capacity for health and environmental outcomes.
- (n) The recent Agfarm demonstration at Parliament House Canberra was notable in the hysteria whipped up by protesters from many regions and disgruntled individuals with legitimate cause. To assume that the public stands with farmers is one issue, to reject alive sheep trade should not be confused with supporting farmers. Consumers have a right to fully understand the source of the food that we eat therefore sheep producers are also being scrutinised for animal welfare. It is not a case of out of sight out of

mind. Packaging of meat products in supermarkets gives no indication of the farming properties / region although some butcher shops can identify the source.

I respectfully ask that everything possible be done to assure us and the wider electorate that there is no covert breach of trust in deciding to overturn a decision to discontinue of all future live sheep export negotiations and contracts. Please reconsider that a phaseout has the enormous potential for showcasing our animal welfare by offering humane and more modern future trade opportunities to our customers abroad. Let's not abrogate our responsibilities to the cargo shipping companies.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute our views to this important inquiry.