

**Submission
No 76**

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

Name: Ms Natasha Cilemanoff

Date Received: 19 September 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Natasha Cilemanoff, a resident of rural Western Australia with family ties to the sheep farming profession. I am writing in response to the inquiry into the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea. Despite my familial connection to the industry, I am deeply appalled by the conditions in which sheep are transported and slaughtered, and believe that we, as a society, should be striving for better treatment of animals.

The live sheep export trade, in my view, is fundamentally discordant with acceptable animal welfare standards. It is evident that recent regulatory reforms have done little to address the inherent welfare issues within the trade. In fact, these reforms have only served to spotlight the depth of these welfare problems embedded in the industry.

The industry often cites falling death rates as an indication of improved animal welfare. However, this metric is not a valid measure of the wellbeing of these animals. Mortality is an extreme indicator which neglects the numerous severe welfare issues that precede death and does not reflect the experiences of the animals that survive. This reliance on mortality rates as a performance measure, despite recommendations to the contrary in the 2018 McCarthy Review following the MV Awassi Express incident, underscores the industry's reluctance to truly reform.

Our sheep, when exported to the Middle East, are often slaughtered while fully conscious. This is in stark contrast to the Halal-accredited slaughter in Australia where stunning is standard practice. The absence of stunning during slaughter causes significant pain and distress in sheep, and I see no credible prospect for Middle Eastern abattoirs to amend this practice in the near future.

Australia's international reputation has been tarnished due to our involvement in live sheep exports. I firmly believe that the most effective way for Australia to demonstrate leadership in animal welfare is by transitioning away from this trade, and utilising our scientific and technical expertise to influence international animal welfare standards.

National polling conducted in 2022 and 2023 consistently shows that a substantial majority of Australians, including those in Western Australia, endorse a phase-out of the trade. These figures illustrate the depth of community concern for animal welfare. Research has even found that awareness of animal suffering, including in the live export trade, can negatively impact the psychological wellbeing of people.

The NSW sheep industry has been largely independent of the live export trade for many years. No NSW sheep have been sourced for live export since at least 2018, and even then, the quantities were negligible. Consequently, there is no compelling evidence to suggest the NSW sheep industry will be significantly impacted by the phase-out of live sheep exports.

The suffering endured by sheep on these ships is palpable. Those who survive the journey continue to suffer upon reaching their destination, often in countries with little to no animal welfare standards. It is high time we embrace moral progress and align ourselves with the right side of history. The inconvenience experienced by one generation of people is a small price to pay for ending the indefinite suffering of these animals. It is not only detrimental to the animals but also to the morale of many Australians who are deeply disturbed by this systematic abuse.

Thank you for considering my views on this critical issue.

Regards, Natasha Cilemanoff