

**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

Impact of the Phase-out of Australian Live Sheep Exports by sea on New South Wales

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you as a resident of a rural community, an animal welfare advocate, and an animal owner. My affection for animals and my firm belief in their welfare, especially for farmed animals, have motivated me to contribute to this inquiry.

It is my belief that the live sheep export trade is fundamentally cruel and unnecessary. Historical experiences and current scientific evidence demonstrate that this trade cannot operate in a way that aligns with acceptable animal welfare standards. The inherent animal welfare issues prevalent in the trade have not been adequately addressed by recent regulatory reforms. Rather, these reforms have only served to emphasise the depth of the welfare problems ingrained in the industry.

Australian Merino sheep tragically do not fare well in high humidity environments, suffering from prolonged heat stress on at least 60% of voyages. This problem is exacerbated as Australian sheep are exported to some of the world's hottest regions. The conditions on the voyages are far from ideal, with sheep forced to endure hot, humid conditions for 2-3 weeks, while standing, lying, and sleeping in their own faeces. They are exposed to multiple and cumulative stressors, including failure to eat, lameness, salmonellosis, infection, and respiratory diseases due to the high ammonia levels on board.

While the live sheep export industry contends that death rates have fallen, this is not an accurate measure of animal welfare. Mortality overlooks the serious animal welfare issues that precede death and does not provide insight into the experience of the surviving animals. The industry's reliance on mortality rates to defend the trade, underscores their resistance to change.

Upon arrival in the Middle East, Australian sheep are slaughtered without stunning, causing them extreme pain, fear, and distress. This is in stark contrast to the practice in Australia, where sheep are stunned before slaughter, significantly reducing their suffering. This includes Halal accredited slaughter for the meat export trade to the Middle East. The fact that Australian sheep exported to the Middle East are still slaughtered while fully conscious is a distressing reality that urgently needs addressing.

Our international reputation has been severely tarnished due to live sheep exports. The most effective way for Australia to exhibit leadership in animal welfare is by transitioning away from the trade and using our scientific and technical expertise to influence global animal welfare standards.

National polling conducted by McCrindle Research in 2022 found that 78% of Australians supported a phase out of the trade, with more recent polling reflecting a similar sentiment. The depth of community concern for animal welfare is such 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 relied on the live export trade for many years, making up less than 3% of annual national turn off and less than 2% of national sheep meat export value. Consequently, there is no evidence to suggest that the NSW sheep industry will incur any notable impacts due to the phase out of live sheep exports. In fact, the 2023 report of the Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports did not identify any perceived impact on the NSW industry from the phase out.

Interstate trade in sheep from Western Australia to Eastern states has had no discernible impact on NSW sheep prices during periods of high interstate trade. The biggest determinant for farm gate sheep prices is international commodity prices for lamb and mutton, given that Australia exports over 65% of the sheep meat it produces.

In conclusion, the overwhelming support for an end to live sheep exports from Australians reflects a desire to cease the suffering and cruelty associated with the trade. The NSW sheep industry, having minimal exposure to the trade, will not be adversely affected by the phase out. Instead, ending this cruel practice could pave the way for Australia to become a leader in global animal welfare.

Regards,