

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 19 September 2024

Partially
Confidential

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you as a member of a family that has a long history with sheep farming. For generations, we've reared sheep on our property, and even in retirement, my relatives still have a fondness for these animals, keeping some as pets. The subject of the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea is close to my heart, and I am grateful that the New South Wales Parliament has established this inquiry to evaluate its economic, social and animal welfare implications.

My fundamental belief is that the live sheep export trade is a cruel and unnecessary practice. Historical observations, coupled with current scientific evidence, suggest that it is impossible to conduct this industry in a manner that adheres to acceptable animal welfare standards.

The live sheep export industry often points to falling death rates as a sign of improved animal welfare. However, this argument lacks scientific validity. Mortality is an extreme measure that fails to account for the myriad of serious welfare issues preceding death. It gives no insight into the experiences of the surviving animals. The 2018 McCarthy Review, conducted in the aftermath of the MV Awassi Express incident, advised the industry to cease using mortality rates as a performance measure. The continued reliance on these rates by the industry and its advocates signals an alarming lack of progress.

It's also pertinent to note that Australian sheep exported to the Middle East are often slaughtered while fully conscious. In contrast, Halal-accredited slaughter within Australia, which includes lamb and mutton exports to the Middle East, employs stunning to minimise animal distress. Unfortunately, there is little prospect of Middle Eastern abattoirs and Halal authorities adopting stunning practices in the foreseeable future.

Contrary to popular belief, Australia's participation in live sheep exports is not a prerequisite for global improvements in animal welfare standards. We are capable of achieving widespread, long-term animal welfare benefits by advocating for higher standards through international platforms like the World Organisation for Animal Health and negotiations on international trade agreements.

Public sentiment is also on the side of phasing out this trade. National polling by McCrindle Research in 2022 found that 78% of Australians support this move. The support is strong even in Western Australia, where most of the trade occurs. A more recent poll in May 2023 showed that 71% of Western Australians, including 69% in rural and regional areas, favour the phase-out.

The psychological toll of the live sheep export trade isn't just limited to the animals. Research from the University of Queensland has found that knowledge and exposure to animal suffering in the trade can have detrimental impacts on human psychological wellbeing. This deep-seated community concern for animal welfare can lead to emotional distress and feelings of helplessness.

It's important to stress that the NSW sheep industry has not been heavily dependent on live exports for many years. No NSW sheep have been sourced for live export since at least 2018, with the numbers even then being negligible. The 2023 report of the Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports did not identify any significant impact on the NSW industry as a result of the phase-out. However, the damage to Australia's international reputation due to the cruelty associated with the live sheep export trade does affect NSW, as it has negative consequences for the entire sheep industry.

In conclusion, the live sheep export trade is incompatible with our responsibility as ethical stewards of animal welfare. Not only is it detrimental to the sheep, but it also has negative ramifications for our international reputation and the psychological wellbeing of our community. Phasing out this trade aligns with public sentiment and would pave the way for improved global animal welfare standards.

Regards,