

Submission  
No 88

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

**Name:** Mr Bertram Lawatsch

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Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you as an individual deeply concerned about the welfare of animals, specifically regarding the live export of sheep and cattle. I firmly believe that we should strive for best practice in animal welfare, and in my view, live exports do not align with this goal.

The live sheep export trade, in its current form, is fundamentally at odds with acceptable standards of animal welfare. Recent regulatory reforms, far from addressing the inherent animal welfare issues, have only served to underscore the depth of these problems within the trade.

Australian Merino sheep, for instance, struggle in high humidity environments, suffering prolonged heat stress during at least 60% of voyages. As they travel through the sweltering, humid equatorial region and enter the Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions, they are exposed to some of the harshest climates on earth. As the effects of climate change exacerbate these extreme temperatures, the risk of catastrophic disasters at sea heightens.

Upon arrival in the Middle East, these Australian sheep are slaughtered without being stunned, causing extreme pain, fear, and distress due to the manual restraint, tissue cutting, and exsanguination. In contrast, in Australia, sheep are stunned before slaughter, which spares them from consciously undergoing the neck cut and bleed-out process, including during Halal accredited slaughter for the meat export trade to the Middle East.

Australia has the opportunity to bolster global animal welfare standards by backing the work of civil society groups such as RSPCA International, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Compassion in World Farming, and Humane Society International. These organisations actively champion programs in developing regions to support the implementation of World Organisation for Animal Health standards.

It is worth noting that the majority of Australians are in favour of ending live sheep exports. This sentiment was echoed in submissions to recent inquiries on the phase-out. Over 80% of the 800 submissions and 3,300 survey responses received by the 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports supported the phase-out. Similarly, more than 85% of the 13,000 submissions and items of correspondence received by the House Agriculture Committee Inquiry into the Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea Bill 2024 expressed support for the Bill.

The importance of this issue is underscored by research indicating that awareness of animal suffering can impact people's psychological wellbeing. A study conducted by the University of Queensland found that exposure to images of animal suffering in the live export trade caused significant emotional distress and feelings of helplessness. They suggested that future media coverage of animal suffering should provide contact details for counselling and mental health support.

The interstate trade of sheep from Western Australia to Eastern states is infrequent, with only three of the past thirteen years seeing volumes over 300,000 head. These volumes are spread out between South Australia, Victoria and NSW, diluting any percentage increase in supply. Even in years of high interstate trade, the numbers amount to less than 10% of the average annual sheep slaughter volumes in NSW. There were no noticeable impacts on NSW sheep prices during these periods, as the biggest factor 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.

Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest the NSW sheep industry will suffer any significant impacts due to the phase-out of live sheep exports. The 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports concurred that an increase in interstate trade between Western Australia and NSW following the phase-out is unlikely, due to the prohibitive freight costs making it an unsustainable and unreliable market for Western Australian producers.

I am committed to supporting any political party, in both state and federal elections, which pledges to halt live exports. I firmly believe that this is a crucial issue that deserves our attention and action.

Regards,

Bert Lawatsch