

Submission
No 92

**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

Thursday 19th September, 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing as a policy officer for the Australian Council of Trade Unions, a fitness professional and a psychology student. My interest in this issue arises from a profound concern for animal welfare and a firm belief in preventing unnecessary suffering. The live sheep export trade is fundamentally incompatible with acceptable standards of animal welfare. Despite recent regulatory reforms, the persistent welfare issues have not been adequately addressed, highlighting the depth of the problems within the trade.

Sheep endure hot, humid conditions during their lengthy sea voyages to the Middle East, where they are forced to stand, lie, and sleep in their own waste. They are exposed to multiple stressors, including failure to eat, lameness, infection, and respiratory diseases due to high ammonia levels on board. Australian Merino sheep, not adapted to high humidity environments, suffer prolonged heat stress on at least 60% of these voyages, particularly in the equatorial region, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. These areas are some of the hottest places on earth, and with rising global temperatures, the risk of catastrophic disasters at sea is increasing.

The industry often cites falling death rates as a measure of improved conditions. However, death is merely an extreme endpoint that overlooks the numerous serious welfare issues that precede it. Mortality rates do not reflect the experiences of surviving animals. Following the 2018 McCarthy Review after the MV Awassi Express incident, the industry was advised to stop using mortality rates as a performance measure. The continued reliance on these rates to defend the trade clearly indicates a lack of meaningful change.

Upon arrival in the Middle East, Australian sheep are slaughtered without stunning, causing extreme pain, fear, and distress due to manual restraint, cutting of tissue, and exsanguination. In Australia, sheep are stunned before slaughter, including for Halal-accredited slaughter, sparing them from consciously experiencing the neck cut and bleed-out process. The live sheep export trade is thus fundamentally incompatible with acceptable animal welfare standards, and recent regulatory reforms have only underscored the entrenched nature of the welfare problems within the trade.

Australia does not need to participate in live sheep exports to contribute to improved global animal welfare standards. Instead, we can support the work of organisations such as RSPCA International, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Compassion in World Farming, and Humane Society International, which actively work in developing regions to implement WOAHS standards.

Australia's international reputation has suffered severely as a result of live sheep exports. The best way to demonstrate leadership in animal welfare is by transitioning away from the trade and using our scientific and technical expertise to influence global standards. Most Australians support an end to live sheep exports, as reflected in submissions to recent inquiries. Of the 800 submissions and 3,300 survey responses received by the 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports, over 80% supported the phase-out. Additionally, of the 13,000 submissions received by the House Agriculture Committee Inquiry into the Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea Bill 2024, over 85% expressed support for the Bill.

The NSW sheep industry has not relied on the live export trade for many years. No NSW sheep have been sourced for live export since at least 2018 when exports from Port Adelaide ceased, and even then, the numbers were negligible. 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. Indeed, the 200-page report makes almost no mention of NSW. The damage to Australia's international reputation caused by the cruelty of the live sheep export trade has negative ramifications for the entire sheep industry.

Australians overwhelmingly support an end to live sheep exports. We do not wish to continue seeing the suffering and cruelty associated with the trade, knowing there are better and more humane alternatives.

I urge you to consider the overwhelming evidence against the live sheep export trade and the strong public support for its termination. By ending this practice, we can protect animal welfare, restore Australia's international reputation, and lead the way in advocating for humane treatment of animals globally. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and I hope you will take the necessary steps to ensure a more compassionate future.

Yours Sincerely,