

Submission
No 102

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 17 September 2024

Partially
Confidential

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am an ordinary citizen with a deep concern for the welfare of animals. I find it abhorrent to witness unnecessary cruelty, and it is my belief that Australia should be setting an example of the highest animal welfare standards, rather than profiting from the suffering of these creatures. A society that profits from pain is not progressive, but rather regressive. We must strive to do better.

Firstly, the live sheep export industry is fundamentally cruel and unnecessary. Past experiences and present scientific evidence demonstrate that it is impossible to run this trade while upholding decent animal welfare standards. The recent regulatory reforms have only highlighted the deep-seated issues within the industry, rather than addressing them.

In particular, Australian Merino sheep are ill-suited to the high humidity environments they are subjected to during their journey. These sheep suffer from prolonged heat stress on the majority of voyages, especially as they cross the hot and humid equatorial region and enter the Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions. The sheep are further exposed to multiple stressors, including failure to eat, lameness, salmonellosis, infection, and respiratory diseases due to high ammonia levels on board. Despite industry claims of reduced death rates, this does not provide a true reflection of animal welfare. Mortality is an extreme measure that overlooks the multiple, serious animal welfare issues that precede death.

Upon reaching the Middle East, Australian sheep are slaughtered without stunning, causing extreme pain, fear, and distress. In contrast, in Australia, sheep are stunned before slaughter, sparing them the terror and pain of the bleeding out process. This includes Halal-accredited slaughter for the meat export trade to the Middle East. Unfortunately, there are no foreseeable changes in the way sheep are slaughtered in the Middle East in the near future.

Australia has the potential to improve global animal welfare standards without participating in live sheep exports. We can achieve long-term benefits to animal welfare by encouraging nations to adopt higher standards through international fora and trade agreement negotiations. Our scientific and technical expertise can be better utilised to influence animal welfare standards internationally, rather than supporting a trade that tarnishes our international reputation.

Recent national polls show that Australians overwhelmingly support a phase-out of the live sheep trade, with 78% in favour of it. This sentiment is also echoed in Western Australia where the trade is predominantly located. Furthermore, submissions to recent inquiries on the phase-out are heavily in favour of ending the trade, with over 80% supporting the phase-out.

The psychological effects of witnessing animal cruelty are significant. Researchers from the University of Queensland have found that exposure to images of animal suffering in the live export trade caused considerable emotional distress and feelings of helplessness. It is clear that the depth of the community's concern for animal welfare extends beyond the animals themselves, impacting the mental health of the population.

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, and even then, the numbers were negligible. There is no evidence to suggest the NSW sheep industry will incur any notable impacts due to the phase out of live sheep exports. 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 cruelty inherent in the live sheep export trade is not only unnecessary but also damaging to Australia's national and international reputation. The overwhelming support from the Australian public for a phase-out of the trade is a clear call to action. It is high time we listened and acted upon it.

Regards,