

**Submission
No 119**

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

Name: Mr Conor Workman

Date Received: 15 September 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Conor Workman, and I am a business owner in New South Wales. I am also a vegan and advocate for animal welfare. While I acknowledge the intent behind the enquiry into the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea, I must express my concern that this exercise might indeed be a waste of time.

I firmly believe that the live sheep export trade does not align with the necessary standards of animal welfare. Recent regulatory reforms have not adequately addressed the inherent animal welfare issues, but instead have emphasised the depth of the associated problems. The industry's argument that death rates have fallen is not a valid measure of animal welfare. Mortality rates overlook the serious welfare issues that precede death and provide no insight into the experiences of the surviving animals. The McCarthy Review of 2018, resulting from the MV Awassi Express incident, recommended the industry move away from such measures. The continued reliance on mortality rates to defend the trade indicates that the industry has not evolved.

Moreover, Australian sheep exported to the Middle East are subjected to slaughter while fully conscious, contrasting with the Halal-accredited slaughter in Australia, which involves stunning. Slaughter without stunning causes significant pain and distress in sheep. Unfortunately, there are no foreseeable prospects for change in this practice by Middle Eastern abattoirs and Halal authorities.

Our involvement in live sheep exports is not necessary for Australia to contribute to improved animal welfare standards globally. We can effect long-term and widespread improvements to animal welfare by working through international organisations such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and international trade agreement negotiations. These avenues allow us to encourage nations to raise their standards.

The Australian public overwhelmingly supports the phase-out of the trade. A 2022 McCrindle Research poll found that 78% of Australians backed a phase out, with even Western Australia, where the trade is predominantly based, showing strong support. A subsequent poll in May 2023 found that 71% of Western Australians supported the phase out, including 69% in rural and regional areas of the state. Australians clearly do not want to continue witnessing the associated suffering and cruelty, especially when more humane alternatives exist.

The level of interstate trade in sheep from Western Australia to Eastern states is inconsistent, with only 3 of the last 13 years seeing volumes over 300,000 head. The numbers are spread across South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales, resulting in a diluted increase in supply. Even during high interstate trade years, the figures equate to less than 10% of the average annual sheep slaughter volumes in New South Wales. There was no noticeable impact on New South Wales sheep prices during these periods, as the main determinant for farm gate sheep prices is international commodity

prices for lamb and mutton, given Australia exports over 65% of the sheep meat it produces.

The 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports found no evidence to suggest that the phase out of live sheep exports would have any significant impact on the New South Wales sheep industry. The high freight costs pose a barrier to sustainable and reliable market development for Western Australian producers, making increased interstate trade unlikely following the phase out.

Thank you for considering my views on this matter.

Regards,

Conor Workman