

**Submission
No 120**

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

Name: Tom Marty
Date Received: 15 September 2024

Dear NSW Parliament Inquiry Committee,

I am writing to you today as a concerned citizen with a deep-seated interest in the prevention of unnecessary cruelty inflicted upon innocent creatures. I am compelled to express my views on the proposal to phase out Australian live sheep exports by sea, an issue I hold in high regard due to its significant implications on animal welfare.

In my view, the live sheep export trade represents a fundamentally cruel and avoidable industry. Historical precedents, coupled with prevailing scientific evidence, unequivocally conclude that this trade cannot be conducted in a manner that satisfies appropriate animal welfare standards. Sheep are subjected to hot, humid conditions over their 2-3 week long sea voyages to the Middle East, during which they are forced to stand, lie and sleep in their own waste. These conditions expose them to multiple and cumulative stressors, including refusal to eat, lameness, salmonellosis, infection, and respiratory diseases owing to high ammonia levels on board.

Furthermore, it is distressing to note that Australian sheep exported to the Middle East are slaughtered while fully conscious. This is in stark contrast to Halal-accredited slaughter in Australia, which involves stunning before slaughter. Slaughter without stunning inflicts significant pain and distress in sheep. Unfortunately, there seems to be no foreseeable change in this practice by Middle Eastern abattoirs and Halal authorities.

This trade has undoubtedly tarnished Australia's international reputation. The most effective approach for Australia to demonstrate leadership in animal welfare is to transition away from this trade. We should instead utilise our scientific and technical expertise to influence animal welfare standards on a global scale.

Public sentiment is clearly in favour of phasing out this trade. National polling conducted by McCrindle Research in 2022 found that 78% of Australians supported a phase-out. Even in Western Australia, where the trade primarily takes place, there has been considerable support for the phase-out. More recent polling in May 2023 found that 71% of Western Australians, including 69% in rural and regional areas, supported the phase-out. It is evident that Australians overwhelmingly desire an end to live sheep exports, given the suffering and cruelty associated with the trade, and our collective belief in the availability of more humane alternatives.

A common misconception is that the discontinuation of this trade would significantly impact interstate trade in sheep from Western Australia to Eastern states. However, the data suggests otherwise. Over the past 13 years, only three have seen volumes over 300,000 head. These are distributed between South Australia, Victoria and NSW, thus diluting any potential surge in supply. Even during years of high interstate trade, these numbers represent less than 10% of the average annual sheep slaughter volumes in NSW. International commodity prices for lamb and mutton, given that Australia exports over 65% of the sheep meat it produces, are the key determinants for farm gate sheep prices. This suggests that any impact on NSW sheep prices during these periods would be negligible.

The 2023 report of the Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports did not highlight any perceived impact on the NSW industry from the phase-out. The 200-page report barely mentions NSW. However, the tarnishing of Australia's international reputation due to the cruelty of the live sheep export trade does affect NSW, as it has negative consequences for the entire sheep industry.

I strongly believe that the phase-out of the live sheep export trade is not only necessary but also a step towards a more humane treatment of animals. I urge you to consider the arguments presented and make a decision that aligns with the values of our society, the welfare of animals, and the overall reputation of our great nation.

Sincerely,

Tom Marty, PhD