

Submission  
No 121

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

**Name:** Mr Steven Merriel  
**Date Received:** 15 September 2024

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Dear Members of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry,

I, Steven Merriel, respectfully submit my perspective on the matter of phasing out Australian live sheep exports by sea. As a corporate executive with extensive experience in animal welfare, including a background in alpaca farming and zoology, as well as years managing research animals at a university level and participating in animal welfare policy groups, I feel uniquely positioned to contribute to this important discussion.

Based on my professional experience and comprehensive understanding of animal welfare issues, I strongly advocate for the cessation of the live sheep export trade. Despite recent regulatory reforms, I contend that the fundamental animal welfare concerns remain unresolved. These reforms have, in fact, further illuminated the inherent welfare challenges within the industry.

While the industry reports decreased mortality rates, it is crucial to recognize that this metric alone does not adequately reflect animal welfare standards. As highlighted in the 2018 McCarthy Review following the MV Awassi Express incident, mortality is an extreme indicator that fails to account for the numerous serious welfare issues preceding death and provides no insight into the experiences of surviving animals. The industry's continued reliance on mortality rates as a defense mechanism underscores a lack of meaningful progress in addressing core welfare concerns.

The prolonged exposure of these animals to multiple stressors during their 2-3 week voyages to the Middle East, particularly in hot and humid conditions, remains a significant welfare issue. Furthermore, the practice of fully conscious slaughter upon arrival in Middle Eastern countries continues to raise serious ethical concerns.

I respectfully submit that Australia can more effectively promote global animal welfare standards by supporting the work of esteemed organizations such as RSPCA International, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Compassion in World Farming, and Humane Society International. Our nation's involvement in live sheep exports is not a prerequisite for contributing to improved international animal welfare standards. We can exert positive influence through participation in international forums like the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and during international trade agreement negotiations.

It is worth noting that recent national polling conducted by McCrindle Research in 2022 indicated that 78% of Australians support a phase-out of the trade. This sentiment extends to Western Australia, where 71% of residents expressed support for the phase-out in a May 2023 poll.

The depth of community concern regarding animal welfare in this context is further evidenced by research from the University of Queensland, which found that exposure to images of animal suffering in the live export trade caused considerable emotional distress among viewers.

From an economic standpoint, it is important to consider that the NSW sheep industry's exposure to this trade is limited, constituting less than 3% of annual national turnover and less than 2% of national sheep meat export value. The 2023 Independent Panel on the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports concluded that increased interstate trade between WA and NSW following the phase-out was unlikely due to high freight costs.

In conclusion, I respectfully submit that there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the NSW sheep industry would suffer significant impacts due to the phase-out of live sheep exports. I earnestly believe that as a nation, we have a responsibility to prioritize animal welfare and respond to the clear public sentiment supporting an end to live sheep exports. There are more humane alternatives available, and I urge the committee to consider exploring and implementing these options.

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry and thank the committee for its consideration of this submission.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Merriel