

Live export by sea of sheep submission

I am a member of the Australian community who has watched on for 20 years now, since 60 Minutes first reported about the abuses occurring to Australian sheep in a report aired in 2003. I have attended many rallies, written many letters and met with my Federal MP in order to discuss this issue and the urgent need to cease the live export trade of Australian sheep by sea to foreign destinations.

There can be no doubt that Australian farmers and politicians and live exporters have known that this trade will end, how anyone who claims to “love their animals like their own children” can in all good conscience still load these animals onto these ships is beyond me. There has been more than enough time given for plans to be put in place to cease these operations and move to slaughter here in Australia and move toward a chilled box-meat export process for Australian sheep.

New Zealand have beaten us to become the first country in the world to ban live exports and Brazil’s federal court has issued an order to ban the live export of live cattle. It is the brutality not only of the voyage itself, but the non-compliance with animal welfare standards that we in Australia expect but that are not upheld in the ports of destination that mean that we have no choice but to cease exporting our sheep to foreign destinations.

Labor’s pre-election commitment to phasing out the live export trade was a leading reason why many of us voted for them at the 2022 Federal election. This comes with it the expectation that the commitment will be upheld and dealt with in a timely fashion – meaning that it MUST be implemented fully by the end of their first term of government. Every day that the live export trade continues is another day where we fail these animals and, more importantly and distressingly, that these animals will suffer and die at sea, or else be brutalised and tortured before finally suffering horrendous death with their throats sliced open while conscious at their final destination.

The longer that the trade continues, the more that any public confidence in the regulation of animal welfare standards by authorities will continue to dissipate, and also that our farmers will be viewed less and less favourably while they continue to sell their animals into a supply chain where the welfare of the animals is completely lacking. Too many times we have witnessed evidence of supposed regulations failing and abuses and suffering occurring on the background of reassurances that Australian welfare standards are being met right up until, and during, the slaughter process.

The government will need to support farmers and processors to establish sufficient capacity to manage the meat processing on-shore, but this is essential in order to cease the trade in the most timely and urgent way possible.