

9 May 2023

Re: Phase out of live sheep exports by sea

Dear Senator Murray Watt and members of the consultation panel Phillip Glyde, Warren Snowdon, Sue Middleton, and Heather Neil,

I am writing as a concerned Australian citizen in relation to the request for feedback on the phase out of live sheep exports by sea.

Timeframe

I strongly support the phase-out of live sheep export from Australia ***as soon as possible***. The inherent cruelty of this practice is unacceptable and must end.

I note that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) committed to phasing out live sheep exports by sea during its 2022 election campaign. I therefore believe that the phase-out should commence ***within this term of parliament***, and that it should be legislated, to make good on an election promise and to ensure that Australians have certainty that this trade will end. Any other time frame will risk being unwound following a change of government at the next federal election.

Impact

Furthermore, I urge the government to provide support to farmers to help them transition away from this trade. This support will ensure a smooth and lasting transition and will also reduce backlash against (and potential reversal) of the phase-out and the ALP.

Opportunities

In addition to the obvious animal welfare improvements, the phase-out of live sheep exports by sea presents Australia with two other large opportunities:

- **Increased demand for chilled and frozen meat boosting domestic processing and jobs:** Phasing out live sheep exports could lead to increased demand for chilled and frozen meat. Therefore, a shift away from live exports could lead to an increase in domestic processing and job creation in the meat processing industry. The chairman of the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) said in 2018 that he believed that Australia's meatworks and abattoirs could meet an increase in demand if live exports were phased out.
- **Improved international reputation:** Australia's international reputation could also benefit from phasing out live exports, as the trade has been a source of controversy and criticism from animal welfare groups and some international markets.

International examples

As noted above, ending live sheep export will also improve Australia's international reputation as a fair and compassionate nation, and bring it in line with other nations that have also phased out live sheep exports.

New Zealand

The government of New Zealand announced in April 2003 that live sheep exports would be phased out, and the last shipment of sheep left New Zealand in February 2007. Therefore, the phase-out was completed in less than 4 years (from announcement to final shipment).¹

The government implemented a transition package to assist farmers and exporters with the move to chilled and frozen meat exports, which included financial assistance, technical support, and market development initiatives. Since the phase-out, the New Zealand sheep meat industry has expanded its export markets and ***increased its revenue***. The move to a focus on value-added chilled and frozen meat products has allowed New Zealand to differentiate its products in the global market, positioning itself as a supplier of high-quality, ethically-produced meat. The phase-out has been widely supported by the New Zealand public and is considered a positive example of a government taking decisive action on animal welfare and improving the reputation of its agricultural industry.

Although smaller than Australia's, New Zealand's sheep export industry is still the second largest in the world. Further, over 92% of lamb and mutton produced in New Zealand is exported to overseas markets, compared to less than 75% in Australia. Therefore, the decision to phase out live sheep exports was a more significant economic decision for New Zealand than Australia, and can represent a good example for Australia to follow.

Other international examples

Other notable countries that have already phased out, or are in the process of phasing out, live sheep exports include the United Kingdom and countries in the EU, including Germany and Luxembourg (other countries, such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium and Denmark, have called for a ban on live animal export outside the EU).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I urge the government to take swift action and to phase out live sheep export from Australia as quickly as possible and in any event within this term of parliament.

Thank you for considering my views on this important issue.

Kind regards



¹ Excluding one shipment of live sheep export from New Zealand in 2015 to Mexico.