

## Written Submission to the Live sheep trade proposed phase out.

As a farmer I travelled to the Middle East in September 2019 to look at the live sheep trade after the summer trade prohibition as part of a Grower Group sheep project. The closing of the trade for 3 months had a significant impact on the markets in Qatar, Dubai and Jordan. I saw firsthand that ESCAS was improving animal welfare outcomes and meat quality for consumers. These markets actively sought out our Australian sheep as the product was consistent in quality and met their religious and cultural requirements. They paid a significant amount more for our sheep than imported animals from Ethiopia or Romania, which were also still being imported live in the summer period. (In poor condition I might add). Saudi Arabia recently agreed to the ESCAS protocols and wants our sheep, opening a lucrative new market for live sheep, creating more competition and greater value in sheep production.

Currently I have cross bred lambs that I have tried to sell into a depressed market since December 2022. The first 200 were booked on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Dec 2022. They went to slaughter on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2023. Who knows when the remaining 700 will find a kill schedule! At least 4 weeks from now I am told. The Albanese Government proposed phase out of the live sheep trade has had a significant impact on producers from abattoirs not taking livestock and falling prices. (This is a foretaste of the future without export live trade) In 2022 I averaged \$199/hd for lamb (which is significantly under the east coast prices in 2022, as we don't have domestic competition to see higher prices in the West.) The first 200 made \$146/hd, this being the top of the local pricing at the time. \$53/hd difference from last year or \$47700 income lost. This being a very conservative figure as my local livestock agent puts the reduction in price from 2022 to 2023 since the live trade abolition was floated at \$63/hd. I am also having to feed the lambs for longer, reduce cropping area to facilitate their welfare. This I would estimate to be \$35600 (178ha @\$200/ha), Lupins and hay (\$400/wk x4). So, at present totalling \$84900. Or \$94/hd cost conservatively (on 900 hd). Uncertainty has a cost. Governments should facilitate business and market development; it is the engine room of the economy and employment. Why do I keep running sheep then if I am incurring a loss? My daughter is doing [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] and I am encouraging her to return to the farm as she loves the livestock. Unlike Government I am trying to encourage farming for the future generations. These social impacts have a greater impact than any animal rights activist that has no skin in farming. Their perceptions of animal cruelty do not pass any test. Activists have been shown to not want any livestock of any kind, from pets to farm livestock. The world cries out for our protein from sheep. In WA we are export focused due to our geography. The current export of live sheep exceeds all requirements mandated by Government and is a successful business that adds value to all farming in WA.

In WA we have insufficient abattoirs to process the extra 1million head of livestock that might be processed if there is no live export trade. The live sheep trade underpins all sheep and wool markets. We will lose significant cashflow on running sheep, which would then result in a complete change in enterprises on our farm in the near term (1 year). Sheep would not be profitable. Resulting in more cropping, more risk in a low rainfall environment (losses more frequently therefore the Govt gets less tax revenue in time), less feed grains being grown resulting in a dominance of fewer options creating more risk again, less maintenance of fencing as they are not required in a 100% cropping farm mix, less personnel to run the farm as cropping is more seasonal, with sheep workers (shearers, shed hands, wool classers, etc) moving away to other industries, cropping requires more technical staff so the pool of workers shrinks, hurting our communities even more. The cost to agriculture, locally and federally is monumental. When a change to the enterprise mix takes place on my farm it will also take place on many farms, which would then see more sheep for sale and a lesser price to be had by all. It is a circular downward spiral for all of agriculture and their communities.

We will see a decline in welfare standards in overseas markets as they still require live sheep culturally and religiously, which will be still imported into those markets without Australian sheep. ESCAS will disappear overseas, mixed species (sheep and cattle) shipments will be harder to fill so cattle shipping overseas will also be affected. The rationale for the cessation of this trade is foolhardy at the best. Our Federal Government is a sovereign risk to our farming. There is enough production and financial risk in farming without adding more from a source that shouldn't. We only need to look at China to see the ramifications for removing trade. Loss of sheep trade could see grain trade embargoed in retaliation. Saudi Arabia did buy large portions of our barley exports. In the future?